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Sándor Márai

American Journal

Part One: 1952–1967

Sándor Márai (1900–1989) started his journal in Budapest in 1943. He wrote it for eventual publication and kept it till the day before he died. After the war he and his wife Lola (mentioned as L. in the journal) left Hungary, and Márai made a pledge not to return until the last Russian soldier had left the country—which he did not live to see. They settled in Italy, but after a long sojourn they moved to the US and lived in New York, where Márai continued to write and publish in Hungarian, meanwhile acquiring American citizenship. In 1967 they decided to return to Italy, for reasons not made clear in the journal. After three short visits to America (1975, 78, 79) they moved back to the US in 1980 for good, and settled in San Diego, California, where they stayed for the rest of their lives. After losing his adopted son and later his wife, the novelist, now totally alone, half blind and almost penniless, shot himself in January 1989.

The multi-volume journal is not a day-to-day account of life but very much a creative intellectual's logbook. He records his reactions to places and minor events that catch his attention, but his major preoccupation is the stance a Hungarian writer should take in exile, the direction the world in general is taking and the moral and intellectual issues that he has to face. His work in progress as a novelist is another subject he frequently comments on.

His reactions to America are mixed. Proud of European traditions, he was not easily swept off his feet by the wealth and technical achievements of a country which, he felt, lacks traditions. He sometimes looks at it with disdain—but chooses to live there. As time goes by, health and the problems of aging are committed to paper with growing frequency. He is a voracious reader in Hungarian, English, French, German and Italian, mainly, but not exclusively, of the classics. The scope of his intellectual curiosity and the never-ceasing urge to comment and criticise are amazing.

Our previous issue (HQ 171) carried selections from his journals written during and after the war, while still in Hungary. The text below is a selection from the journals kept during his first stay in the US. A next, final selection, from the journals kept during his second period in America, right to the day before he died, will appear in our next issue.

1952

New York—The SS Constitution tied up on the Manhattan water-front, dead on schedule, at 9 o'clock this morning. I was already up on deck at 7 a.m. The sun was shining. Manhattan's skyscrapers appeared in the distance, out of the pale-blue April haze of the land, like a hovering apparition. This spectacle was bewitching in the blue-gold light, the loveliest arrival I have ever experienced. The skyscrapers shimmered in the soft-toned, greyish-blue air and golden sunlight. Somehow New York at this moment reminded me of Venice. Arriving in Venice, on spring mornings, is much like this. This, however, is the other Venice: the Venice of the atomic age, not the *settecento*.

At daybreak, in the heart of New York, in the shadow of Manhattan's skyscrapers, I awaken to the cooing of pigeons before the window, just as in Posillipo. Pigeons have roosted along the window-ledges of the twenty-storey hotel, and at dawn they chirr and warble with rural familiarity.

If I ever write another poem in my life, I would write about the New York sky. The firmament here is different from any that I have ever seen: graver, sterner, more majestic and more awesome. Maybe the skyscraper towers push the canopy higher up. And its colour is not such a mollifyingly gentle blue as the Italian sky, but dark, steely. The ocean is mirrored in it, infinity, disproportion, superhuman fate.

On Sunday afternoon I take a walk along the shore of the Sound to New Rochelle. The crags on the shore here are rust-coloured, the rocks honed smooth over thousands of millions of years by the cruel ocean. The whole of America is built on hard rock like this. It is a hard fate, this; there is something alluring and awe-inspiring about it.

*

In the Air Museum in Washington, I saw Lindbergh's aircraft again. Twenty-five years ago I saw the plane touch down at Le Bourget airport. I was there in the crowd, touched its wings. The aircraft resembles today's rocket-propelled planes in much the way the original capitalism that Marx criticised a century ago resembles modern capitalism as it has been updated in response to social demands.

New York. The new building in which I have leased this enchanted castle of a three-rooms-and-hall apartment stands on the bank of the Hudson. The house is an Aladdin's cave of modern American gadgetry: it is cooled and heated day and night, in every sense. Invisible and reliable mechanical golems serve the residents. I don't care to argue with immigrants who deride American technology. Whilst that technology certainly is not 'everything', it is still a great deal; it provides an awareness of life which embraces possible gradations.

Taking strolls here is suspect. Near the house is the Cloyster, a small wood beside the big river. Big trees, oaks and even acacias; Negroes fishing on the

riverbank. All this is still Manhattan, yet it is an area that in the morning and evening offers an hour's stroll around the house, in a riverside wood. Whilst out walking, though, I rarely encounter another human; those who do pass by are not strolling but going somewhere, and they cast suspicious glances at me.

*

The propensity to be 'frugal', and therefore to set aside and keep every rag, scrap of paper or empty bottle because 'it may come in handy', is still very much alive in L.. The past ten years' miseries of world war and what came after have inculcated us, Europeans, with this sickness of looking on anything 'material' as being of value and parsimoniously guarding it. It is a hard habit to shake. It is hard to learn that in America a person is being 'economic' by using and disposing of everything, squandering raw materials and goods. As in Huxley's utopian novel, the heretic is the one who is parsimonious. Hard to learn that, though.

*

I paid my first taxes in America—thus truly settled in the new homeland.

In the library of the French Institute, on 60th Street. I enter the building and, all at once, am struck by a strange sense of familiarity, genuinely, almost bodily.

In the vestibule is a statue of Ronsard. Few New Yorkers (nor indeed, Frenchmen) are aware that Ronsard was of Hungarian extraction.

*

For weeks now, a suddenly recurring symptom: whilst reading or walking I get a sudden feeling that I must scream—and I do, mutely, soundlessly—as when a person unexpectedly sees something abominable. Yet all along I am completely calm and feel no distress or fear of any kind. I cannot even imagine what sort of abomination it is at the sight of which I scream inside, mutely, horrified?

In the situation I am in *Robinson Crusoe* makes for odd reading. The scene where Crusoe salvages what he can from the shipwrecked vessel in order to construct a new life on the island from the remnants particularly reminds me of everything that I have been doing since February 1945; of the moment when I set eyes on my devastated apartment at the foot of a still smoking Castle in Buda.

1953

New York. In the morning, lines from Goethe's airy-fairy lyrical poems. He enjoins patience; yet he, Goethe, was not patient—at least not in his relations with people. What he was patient with was his own work. Over eighty years he did not tire of approaching his work with patience.

Is it possible to write without any response, confined within a language that no longer seems to be a living language? There were ages when writers, in a sea of barbarity, had to write like that. Yet those writers had something to hope for: a new culture that one day, beyond the grave, would make speak what they had written amidst a deafening lack of response. Precisely that is what one cannot hope for these days—at least not within a human perspective.

*

The Forrestal Diaries. The US Secretary of the Navy, who three years ago jumped out of a window and died on the spot, was a clear-thinking madman. The madness, then the jump to his death swirl slowly, like a dense cloud, behind the setting of objective notes. On the final night he read Sophocles and copied out the 'Ajax' chorus.

He started keeping a diary in 1945. At that time everyone—Forrestal included—'foresaw' everything. They knew that the Russians would be powerful if the Americans and British demobilised after the war, yet they demobilised. They knew that Czechoslovakia would be lost if they withdrew the two American divisions from there, yet they withdrew the divisions. Everyone foresaw and foretold everything, and everything duly came to pass. Some jumped out or fell from a window, like Forrestal and Masaryk's son; others did not jump.

*

Eisenhower's inauguration is on television. One interlude is touching. Immediately before Eisenhower took the oath, a diminutive Negro woman stepped onto the platform and, in an exquisite soprano, sang *The Star-Spangled Banner.* With raw energy and desperate faith, this woman, whose ancestors were brought here three hundred years ago as slaves from the Gold Coast of Africa, sang that *The Star-Spangled Banner* was her flag too. That made it a very unusual song.

*

A strange and sudden agitation that does not let up the whole day, because it came to mind that, as far as one can tell, I shall not be able to see my mother again.

*

Acquaintances relate that Bartók, who now counts as a celebrated master of modern music, just a few years ago lived out the final years of his life here, in America, in straitened circumstances. He nevertheless believed in his art. Great strength is required to do that. One has to have faith that the life's work that an artist or writer has created with unconditional devotion will eventually reach a public, even if it was written in Sanskrit and rests in a metal box in the sands of

the Ganges. A great deal of time will be needed, and great creators rarely live to see the response. That is the price which has to be paid.

*

Something is in the process of emerging in opposition to 'Eurasia' which is not designated 'Euramerica' on maps but nevertheless is that in reality.

Last night a vision: Europe and America.

I see Europe as a swamp full of colourful flowers, birds and sedges. This huge swamp is steaming with perilous, scalding, marshy vapours.

America I see as a primeval forest, full of secrets. One can only advance step by step; a wanderer is obliged to throw himself to the ground at any moment so as to fumble about on the ground, covered in lianas, ferns, mosses and leaf-mould, and check whether there might be a nest of snakes or trap somewhere. In this primeval forest one can only crawl ahead slowly, knife between teeth. Amongst the unrestrained foliage of the trees and the shrubs, mysterious monsters howl, orang-utans, tigers, monkeys chatter, brightly plumed cockatoos screech. This is a primeval forest with secrets and no rules, full of instantaneous surprises.

Europe, however, is the mature, steaming, poisonous, exciting, heady swamp. I saw all this last night, so real that it was palpable.

*

At noon today, the unveiling of a memorial plaque commemorating the purchase of Manhattan Island took place in front of our apartment. The city dignitaries rolled up in limousines and top hats. Then American Indians showed up, men and women, in feather headdresses. A police band also arrived. A number of officials made speeches. One of the speakers was the chairman of New York City's tax commission, and he related that the island on which Manhattan was built, and which the Dutch had purchased from the Indians, on this very spot, three hundred years ago for the sum of 24 dollars, today represented 9 billion dollars in real-estate value. Everyone applauded, the Indians included. Amongst them was a young and pretty woman. The men had painted their faces in red and yellow pigments. During the ceremony, the descendants of the Manhattan Indians sat with discomfited expressions on the seats of honour, as though they were ashamed their ancestors had been such mugs.

The simple memorial was then unveiled, and the police band launched into a triumphant blaring. The Indians signed autographs for students, then in full war dress hurried off on foot towards the nearby subway station. I sat down on a bench opposite the memorial. The sun was shining; it was a balmy spring day. I would never have imagined a day would come when a memorial plaque before my home would proclaim the moment the Dutch purchased the territory of New York from the Indians.

*

In America the salesman is an embodiment of roughly the same social ideal as an army officer was in Hungary of old. A well groomed, well mannered young man who 'gets around everywhere' (and salesman here, like the army officers back home, do indeed 'get around' the best families because they knock on every door), is well dressed and dashing, has an esteemed position in society. He has young girls dreaming about him, just as girls in olden-day Hungary would dream about a hussar lieutenant of good family. Always clean-shaven, always dapper, always sociable, always ready with an elegant greeting and a polite smile to boot.

*

America is now going through a period when it is no longer expanding through immigration, as it did in the last century, but through natural increase, from its own population stock. Immigrants no longer have a role as a leavening or booster. The 160 million mass is multiplying naturally. The result is not yet a 'Race' but is already a 'people'.

*

One phenomenon amongst American immigrants of recent times is the dim-witted adventurer. In earlier times an adventurer could not afford to be dim, because he would perish in the great competition. Only an adventurer who was talented, courageous and daredevil could thrive in the America of the pioneering days. Nowadays, however, there are many dimwit immigrant adventurers who possess neither the courage nor the talent for this tough and hazardous métier yet believe they can make it with a few tricks. They come to grief. The other phenomenon: immigrants of petty bourgeois background who arrive on the shores of the New World and believe they have 'won out'. Here they are, in a democracy, and for a while they unbridledly, ostentatiously, with a newcomer's immoderation celebrate their release from a Europe poisoned with 'aristocratic, feudal prejudices' where, for whatever reason, they did not feel valued at their true worth. Here, though, in this democracy, where 'success' is the touchstone of everything, man included, they will be able to prove themselves to the hilt... After some time has passed, they realise that things are not quite like that. If they have acquired some money, they soon notice that there are others who acquired more money before they did, and the latter are loath to mix socially with those who came more recently and have acquired less money. Yet in an aristocratic society a man who, through birth or circumstances, is started off at in the worldly race with a handicap may still find the means—through individual excellence, learning, talent, nobility of principles—of rising to the very top, even without tasting 'success'. In this democracy, a person who is 'merely' excellent, talented or high principled yet does not have 'success', the hall-mark of money, to match will not make it to the top. The newcomer tumbles to that and, as a result, there arise those strange depressions, nervous breakdowns, intolerable

social unrest, the pathological symptoms of petty-bourgeois snobbery about careers, and persecution manias.

*

This morning a Negro of thirty-five or forty was sitting opposite me in the subway car: an intelligent-looking man, who glanced attentively around before mustering me at length. Suddenly, an involuntary spark of hatred gleamed in his eyes that there was no mistaking. For a second he 'saw' the better-dressed White man, then immediately turned away to stare in front of him with the wearily listless gaze that Negroes generally adopt in public places. His right hand was feeling the place where his left arm would be, and it was only then that I noticed he had an arm missing. Encounters like this are everyday occurrences, but the spontaneity of that look of hatred was such as I have rarely observed before here, in New York. The helplessness, the inexcusable, the fact that he was black and, moreover, had an arm missing!— this Creature's by now not-so-much-accusatory as just flashing, confirmatory glare was more terrible than that. What is God's will? Does He 'will' anything at all?

*

Americans have a touching desire for tradition: to commemorate Abraham Lincoln they not only built 'the largest monument in the world' but also placed his top hat in a glass case in one of the museums here. The hat is a shabby, stovepipe construction. Americans would like to have a tradition of some kind, speedily, modestly, and for home consumption, but that need is nothing more than a collective nervous tic. The need for tradition is no longer alive in their private lives: no one parts from his home, his place of residence or inherited possessions with so light a heart as an American.

*

An immigrant Hungarian, finickily unsatisfied with conditions here, asks why, in point of fact, am I in America. My answer is because this is the only way in which I can hope to remain a Hungarian writer. Curious though it may be, that really is the case.

*

Autumn. I would like to live to see one more true autumn, in Europe, somewhere around Sorrento, with a wine-cellar, newly-pressed grapes, acridly misty mornings and evenings. A strange experience it is to be trudging one's way out of time when everything that one loves in life speaks to us with such force.

*

In the Whitney Museum. The pictures and sketches of Reginald March, painter of the New York underworld, snapshooter of Manhattan's underworld. He

learned from Daumier and Hogarth—and well. Humbly, earnestly, he saw the New York reality behind the skyscraper scenery, the human and material waste out of which the city was built. In the same way as Manhattan's Central Park was pieced together from refuse, this other New York of people was made from the human discards of Europe and the world... This is all well captured by this sketcher and painter, sombrely, humbly, faithfully. Not a great artist, but his talents bring him close to what he wishes to make known.

In a hospital. The receptionist, a mulatto woman, is unable to pronounce my name: *"It's not an English name,"* she grumbles peevishly, resentfully. I remind her that Columbus did not have an English name either; those standing nearby —most of them impoverished Italians—laugh. A baleful, confused look appears in the mulatto woman's eyes.

1956

Homesickness to see again the Neapolitan handicraftsmen 'making their little pots', weak-eyed and painstakingly, at the front of their dark little workshops in the back-street alleys. They sole shoes, or engrave *intaglio* designs, or repair umbrellas, and express a sense of the enjoyment of work in the reverential care with which they bend over their work. This is the purest 'satisfaction', one that Freud seems not to have had in mind when he constructed his arbitrary hypotheses on the *'Lustprinzip'*—the pleasure principle. 'Satisfaction' is not 'pleasure', more a special, serious and, simultaneously, cheerful—yes, optimistic fulfilment of duty, which also denotes complete 'satisfaction'. The 'little potters' know this, in Naples as elsewhere.

A chilly day, first leaves, small-town folk sauntering on Fifth Avenue—and, at the same time, the folk of the global pageant, an astonishing, colourful and unpredictable human swirl. I sit for a long time in front of the central building of the Public Library, the young, bespectacled girl next to me gravely reading Waugh's satire, *The Loved One.* A Negro woman comes by with Joyce's *Ulysses* in her hand. The whole setting is at once small-townish and also cosmopolitan. The costliest of boutiques jostle with discount stores selling job-lot goods at knock-down prices. That range in quality goes for the people as well.

*

7 November.—After an eight-hour flight over ocean and clouds, a sudden explosion of light. The plane tipped from the West into the air space of the East. No gradual 'dawn' but, all at once, the world becomes dazzlingly light. We fly above a thick, fleecy layer of cloud. The firmament is an azure such as I have never seen before. We carry on flying for a further two hours in that way. The machine suddenly descends into the dense cotton wool of the clouds: all goes dark as we fly for a quarter of an hour in cloud. Then a familiar brown element starts to emerge far below: dry land, Europe.

We touch down in Scotland, near Glasgow. Half an hour's stroll in the air terminal, behind the grille to which the passengers are shepherded by women in uniform. The grille is already familiar—European. The mist descends.

After half an hour, onwards. The machine cuts over the Channel in a few minutes, then over Belgium and the Netherlands without landing. After sixteen hours of flying, a smooth touchdown in Munich. In the streets, flags lowered to half-mast as a mark of mourning for Hungary, protestors.

10 November, Munich.—Refugees are talking. One of them, an engineer, saw my younger brother just a few days ago in Budapest. Another says, "It's too late now, I'm sorry to say. But there were a few days there... from the twenty-third of October to maybe the second of November... when the country had a government that was recognised and supported by the whole Hungarian nation... the Imre Nagy government... why did the United Nations not send a team of observers to Budapest at that point?" More than one is speaking at once. This is the moment when they are coming to. Some of them were still on Hungarian soil just twenty-four hours ago; some will go back. "The Russians dare not come out of their tanks by night; that's when it is possible to cross the frontier." Then once again, abruptly: "There were ten days when there was no frontier to the West, no Iron Curtain... Everyone came and went as they pleased... That was how it was up till the third of November, and even for two or three days after... It's trickier now... But even now it is possible..."

*

22 *November, Munich.*—Back in a storm. Snow is falling when the plane arrives at Munich, the wheels skid on touching down. Once again in the Jewish pension. One refugee—a physician, Jewish, once in a labour camp—had arrived three days before: "There was no anti-Semitism during the days after October the twenty-third; no class, no denomination. Everyone was united. It was worth living for that alone. I'm a Jew, and I have many bad memories; but during these days, for the first time in my life I felt proud to be a Hungarian."

Another refugee, an engineer, says, "It's not true that radio stations fomented the uprising. That's nonsense or a malicious rumour spread by the Russians. Nor is it true that they promised arms or armed support." He falls silent as he carefully chooses his words: "But it's true that every Western radio station and newspaper, then the statesmen and everyone else assured us, for years on end, that the West feels solidarity." He again pauses before saying, calmly and quietly, "I tell you, we Hungarians now want to live in a neutrality of the mind."

*

4 December, New York.—Hot spell. A warm fog over the Hudson. Whilst out strolling, without warning, I suddenly hear the sound of the refugee engineer's voice saying, "I tell you, we Hungarians now want to live in a neutrality of the mind."

1957

January, New York.—Afternoon tea in the Museum of Modern Art. On the walls those coloured blobs of pus that nowadays are called 'abstract modern art'. The bulk of the public are bearded, bell-bottommed men and women (the latter bearded too)—a swarm of wild-eyed geniuses and psychoanalysed millionaire whelps. A world concept is disintegrating; the cohesive force of art is no longer holding anything together; everything is disintegrating into its atoms.

*

Something very, very big that happened back home: Hungary existed—for a moment, beyond class barriers—in the revolution.

Mother's first letter since the revolution. She writes, "We know that only time will help, nothing else. In time, though, even drips of water become dripstones: it is necessary to be like a stone, to become petrified..." She turned 83 this January.

*

D. H. Lawrence's paintings and drawings. In the last years of his life he started to draw and paint with nervous haste, striving primitively and childishly to convey with line and figure the erotic turmoil that was manifested with messianic pretensions in his books. These drawings are a bit like the graffiti pubescent boys scrawl on walls. The discomposure of Anglo-Saxons when they come up against the problems of the body and sensuality is always profoundly pubescent. They cover themselves up excessively when they encounter sensuality—or else they undress excessively.

*

A Hungarian lad—nineteen years old, a refugee—says the Russians are cowards; it is only in the West that people think they are strong. If the Hungarian revolutionaries in October had possessed more weapons, they would have driven the Russian tanks back to the border and then Imre Nagy would have had time and the wherewithal to negotiate... That is not beyond the bounds of possibility, for on 30 October there appeared the Moscow declaration, which described the Hungarian revolution as victorious, whilst confusion and indecision were rife in the Kremlin at the time. Another refugee writes: "'Liberal' Western propaganda strives to foster the belief that the Russians are overwhelmingly powerful... The Bolsheviks are all cowardly, their cruelty outstripped only by their stupidity."

*

The Eastern and the Western worlds will one day have to account for what happened to Hungary, then for what did not happen. That reckoning will be slow, but it is unavoidable. For occidental civilisation it will be a fundamental reckoning, cloaked in mystery and with ever-widening repercussions over time. The West's negligence can be aptly tied to the comment made by Talleyrand when Napoleon had the duc d'Enghien summarily executed: "This was more than a crime... it was a mistake."

*

This morning in Wall Street, then from there to the waterfront. A cold, clear light. In these concrete 'canyons' of Wall Street and the back-streets of the piers, New York is particularly big-city, private, old... Here there are already long-standing, decaying eating-houses; there is some old-fashioned, humane disorderliness in the small streets where the poor office workers of big Money sun themselves, loaf and snack during their lunch hour. There is also a kind of brutal, merciless force in these Banks and Palaces... The whole is animated by some pagan religious energy—not by Money, but by the Intention reflected back from here to the world.

The dog that the Russians imprisoned in Sputnik has snuffed it, and now Sputnik is orbiting Earth with a dead dog. If things go on as they do, the day may come when Earth will orbit the Sun with a dead human race.

*

Canada.—On crossing the Canadian border via the United States, and thus stepping over from one immensely vast country into another immensely vast country, the traveller does not feel for one moment that he is moving 'between countries'; he is still travelling 'on the continent'. That continent is America, and it is more strongly a continent than all that is separated by frontier lines between the two ocean coasts. One does not sense that in Europe: there I always travel between countries.

*

...By the roadside everywhere the premises of big American factories. For all that, Yankees hold back their very breath in speaking with Canadians; they always stress that they see them as equal partners... The Canadian dollar is worth a few cents more than the US dollar, which irritates the Yankees, of course; it offends their pride that there should be a currency which is more valuable than the Yankee dollar. They could blow that few cents' exchange premium away with a single puff, but they refrain from doing so. *Fair play,* the Canadian dollar is stronger... That glory, of course, costs Canada dearly.

Ottawa.—The external appearance is like a Shakespearean scene, or rather the setting for one of Walter Scott's novels. Everything emphatically and artificially Imperial, stagey. A capital city which gives orders to the population of an

Empire but does not, as yet, give orders to the Territory. Strategists believe that Canada will be a Belgium between the two Superpowers in the next world war—a military jumping-off ground.

Toronto.—The road leads through a dreary landscape; one thousand kilometres of prairie. Toronto is a big village with one million inhabitants and multi-storey buildings. In a 'tavern' where melancholic men drink sour beer: "Entrance (indeed *end*rance) only for men." A refugee Hungarian actor took his own life here not long ago. New immigrants don't take well to this Little England atmosphere.

Niagara.—I drive over the bridge here that links Canada and the United States in a taxi, and the American border guard sticks his head in the window to ask who I am—so much for border inspection. It is a pleasure, after the fussing at European borders. It is the first time since my childhood that I have travelled between big countries in the same way as our fathers once used to do in Europe, with a business card and one's word as one's bond... The American border guard does not believe the Canadian taxi driver, however, but gets him to open up the car boot: "Maybe there is somebody," he says with a laugh. Such things will happen.

That afternoon on Goat Island—the Capri of this part of the world... I stretch out for hours on end on the grass by the banks of the Falls. From up close, the magnificent play of water, from which touristic banalities have been unable to detract, asserts something with ferocious consistency. The sun is shining brightly; the trees throw deep shadows, the grass is sweet-smelling. Here, beside me, the great water mass plunges into the depths... In the atomic age, the reality of this cataract is mingled with strange associations of ideas. A sluggishly rolling, slowly sloping river all at once becomes a shattering waterfall... like everything into which I was born. Epic, Way of Life, Awareness of Life were transformed like this... setting off as a river, rolling along, and today impetuously plunging, clattering and shattering like the waterfall...

New York.—Arriving in New York at night always fires up something within me. This city by night says something with its million coloured lights, its crazy brilliance. There is no way of telling where and when New York 'begins'... and no way of telling where it ends. Everything glitters aimlessly, dangerously, superhumanly. All I sense is that I have arrived... but where? I almost said 'home'.

The visions of mystics are sometimes vindicated in strangely roundabout ways: William Blake's "To see a World in a Grain of Sand"—now, two hundred years later, a world that, for the nuclear physicist, has been explored, mapped out and surveyed for land-registry purposes.

L. says that dreams "change according to the continent": a person does not dream "the same things" in America as in Europe.

The phenomenon of the *dandy* did not exist in American life of the last century: there was a Poe but no Baudelaire, because that was not the right climate.

*

Again the dream of returning home; the figures change but the dream is always the same. The terror that racks me towards the end of the dream (because 'I went home and can no longer get away from there') was stronger last night, getting on for four o'clock in the morning, than ever before. And the guilty relief on awakening, the dawning realisation that 'it was only a dream', in which there is a sense both of liberation and of disappointment.

In recent months several people have written "We're glad you are not here, at home, because the Communists would unquestionably have turned you too into a fellow-traveller; but you must regret that you did not live through the revolution with us back home." There may be the nub of the truth here.

*

I am at a stage of life when that strange anticipation in which, in the past (during youth, maturity, then the early phase of old age) there was a ceaseless, workaday awareness of life underpinning wakefulness and dream, has ceased for me. I no longer 'look forward' to anything. The 'waiting-for-Godot' demeanour has totally vanished from my life. One used to look forward to Pleasure, or Success, or Surprise, and somehow they always came along, Pleasure and Success and Surprise, in their good and their bad variants. But then a moment ensues when somehow nothing 'comes' any more, which is when Anticipation also ceases. For a while longer one awaited a sort of Vindication... but then one morning one awoke and grasped that there is no Vindication. All there is are facts. That is what I sense every day, and that is why I don't 'look forward' to anything. I am starting to grow old.

There must have been around a hundred and fifty of us in the courtroom when I took the oath of allegiance for American citizenship. The chamber was on one floor of the municipal building of New York's so-called South District, the Stars and Stripes and an eagle in one corner. On the dais there were armchairs upholstered in green leather for the judges; in front of the dais, tables for the court officials. I was summoned to appear at a quarter to two and had to sign the citizenship papers, then we all sat in the rows of benches and waited for the judge who was going to administer the oath.

A few minutes before the judge arrived, an official stood at the centre of the chamber and called on all those who had undergone a "change in heart" to announce if they had changed their intention and did not wish to become American citizens. There was still time to do so, the official said, but in a few minutes, once they had been sworn in by the judge, they would be citizens, and that gave them rights but also responsibilities. No one budged. The next few minutes passed in profound, solemn silence.

A gavel was tapped, and through a noiselessly opening, heavy oak door stepped the black-gowned elderly judge. He stood at the centre of the dais, a black-bound book in his hand, just like a priest. One of the officials, in remem-

brance of some antique judicial tradition, shouted out a triple "Hear ye!" We all got to our feet. The official then read out the oath, some passages of which we repeated, right hand raised. The chamber buzzed quietly—only the vow "So help me God" sounded somewhat louder.

Now the judge started to speak, his discourse flat and clerical. "This country is not an earthly Paradise," he said. "Do all in your power that it should be better and more perfect. Thank you!" He then left the chamber.

1958

A book in the window of a New York bookshop bears the title *Practical Mysticism.* That's America for you.

Proust's *Jean Santeuil:* This sketchy, youthful work sweeps the reader along with it like a musical composition. It is on these pages that the fugues and leitmotifs of *A la recherche du temps perdu* first swell... As in the later, complete work, he uses a million words to say only what is necessary. The trick, though, requires that the writer knows his readers, is aware whom he is addressing. The style is absolutely predicated on intimacy... That is lacking in America. Here a writer does not see the faces of his readers and speaks into a dark vacuum. That is why Henry James, Eliot and many more cut and ran from here.

*

Old people continually mutter prompts to themselves: Do this or that, say it like this or that... That is ageing. A person no longer trusts in the 'other' self, doesn't trust—himself, whom he knows and but prompts him. On ageing a person becomes his own Cyrano, continually prompting the blockhead who is himself.

1959

The Camino Real stretch of the twisting road along the coast is lined by all sorts of wine cellars and roadside stalls that sell freshly picked avocados, oranges, lemons as well as all kinds of plums, apples, pears and figs. A land of milk and honey that vies with the bountiful fruit gardens of the Naples area or Campagna. The trees along the highway—eucalyptuses, magnolias, banyans, that group of botanical Laocoons—evoke peculiarly 'anthropomorphic' notions, like fig-trees do in Italy... The sun is shining, the ocean is calm, literally 'pacific'. The primeval body glints like mercury in the light. The rocky sugged shore is wildly, romantically declamatory, like the Italian Riviera around Ravello. The vegetation of the Pacific coast, however, is not as domesticated as along the Mediterranean littoral. The palm-trees here are ruffled and muscular. Nature here has not yet become as tamed as it generally is in the European landscape. In strong winds the singular trees on the ocean coast toss and bow with much

whistling and howling. The mimosas shiver, scattering the downy-fluffy tresses of their yellow heads of hair all over the highway.

Monterey.—The small town has a whiff of history about it: this was the principal town a hundred years ago, when California tipped from Spanish-Mexican status into the Yankee world; this is where the Union flag was first raised. Time values here are different from Europe: a hundred years here constitutes remote, moss-covered history. The customs house in the harbour where the Mexican authorities used to interrogate smugglers, the cabin where gold-diggers used to guard their haul, the gold-dust, during the Gold Rush—all that is the remote past in this place, which does not yet have a past. Many intellectuals fled here from the commercial barrenness of America's urban civilisation. The idyll, however, is now at an end: pensioners, having made their money, have taken the town over; property speculators have pounced on 'the historical ambience'. All the same, Monterey has a whiff of history about it: there is still a sense of the Hispanic, of otherness, about the place to this day. The fishermen in the harbour view the sea bed in glass-bottomed boats. The air can be bitten on and chewed; it is as clear and appetising as an ice-cold, carbonated soft drink. After the steamy climate of the Atlantic coast, heated to a wash-house swelter by the vapours of the Gulf Stream, this air acts like a glass of champagne on an empty stomach.

*

Pasadena.—A 'Biblia pauperum' high above Los Angeles, in the Huntington Museum. The book was produced for illiterate priests and believers at the same time as the Gutenberg Bible, with small illustrated panels presenting the most essential episodes of the story in the Scriptures. Pious folk gained their information about the meaning of the Scriptures from such tiny graphics: Jonah can be seen in the belly of the whale. Just like today, when the little graphics of 'comic strips' in the newspaper supplements tell stories to the simple folk in this mass-culture world. The day came when these tiny graphics were made to move. The successor to the *Biblia pauperum* is the movie, as realised in Hollywood. One can look out from the windows of the Huntington Museum onto the city down below, to which people of every rank and station, swindlers and geniuses, the Don Quixotes and adventurers of the mind, all made their pilgrimages in order to create motion pictures, a new Bible for the blessed poor.

Huntington constructed railroads and made many millions through property speculation in California. The colonnaded entrance to the huge palace leads to a hall on the walls of which portraits of the museum's founders, Mr and Mrs Huntington, hang alongside costly pictures by Reynolds and Gainsborough's *The Blue Boy.* The man is a stern-looking, shrewd-eyed citizen. You can see that he was born into a world in which no one, as yet, had heard of such things as progressive real wages and progressive income tax. Wearing a plumed hat in the

picture, Mrs Huntington is a bespectacled grand lady of the last century. Like the nobles of the Bourbon court before the revolution, these southern Californian grandees of monopoly capitalism in the early twentieth century gaze from the picture, with the same historical defiance, into the age that was to sweep away their privileges. The people received the palaces of the plantation and pioneering industrial aristocracy as endowments from the former owners. The way of life that had these palaces built was dismantled by the American Civil War, taxation, social and economic transformation. That change also took place in Europe, but in a different manner: even today the French, Italians and Spanish are still just beginning to get to grips with the transformation of grand lifestyles; the Scandinavians, Germans and British are treading that path without revolution. But everywhere time hands the palaces over to the people, and the Western transformation is more humane, more organic, than the solutions enforced by the Russians and Chinese in the East.

*

San Diego.—Back to the United States in blazing sunshine, amongst square-mile-sized tomato plantations covered with plastic sheeting. The clean, air-conditioned coach. The water at the roadside inn that one may safely drink without fear of Montezuma's revenge. A civilisation's protective and concealing defence... Back from wonderful, wild, haughty and hazardous Mexico to the proletarian-parvenu United States, where, over the course of one hundred years, a small number of strong Western men achieved a standard of living for the masses that the inhabitants of Mexico, endowed with the reflexes of a grand, old civilisation, have been unable to accomplish over centuries.

The southern Californian city is soothing, placatory from the first glance. The air is cool, at once sweet and salty. Substantial but not overblown business houses on the broad boulevards; pleasant but not swank residential districts on the hills around. An American city in which everything is within reach, gratifyingly close at hand. And with the southern elegance of Palermo. With its Spanish renaissance buildings and arcaded houses, Balbao Park, perched above the city and the harbour, is a rarity in America. Buildings that make a statement over and above the merely utilitarian, make the best of the opulent possibilities of ornamentation. The museums in an arcaded row of palaces in the big, shady park. A few well-chosen pictures in the art gallery; plenty of Flemish painters but also Goya, El Greco, Titian and Rembrandt. Cool and fragrant shadows in the park.

*

The photographs were produced here, at the Mount Palomar observatory, with the aid of the five-meter [200-inch] reflector. The back-lit glass plates depict gaseous patches that float and subsequently, in a condensing phase, coalesce—one of them more rarefied, another studded with brilliant stellar bodies and

galaxies. These cosmic formations, to which the name of the Milky Way is given, cohere in clusters in space. Each such galaxy comprises billions upon billions of solar systems like our own. There are billions upon billions of such galaxies in space. The photographs are sharp, evocative.

Others, though, are savagely sensual. They show chain nuclear explosions, the story of cosmic Passion and Coupling—like pornographic pictures. Life, as the photograph also shows, always comes into being with passion, cosmic life just the same as biological, organic life. Individual galactic bodies embrace, interlace, writhe in violent love.

*

Superstition Mountains. The oases and ranches in the desert landscape's flood of light; gardens stuffed with cacti, palms and flashy flowers; single-storey palaces equipped with the latest gadgets, where America's kinglets, its 'aristocrats', have built winter pleasure-houses for themselves. Who is an 'aristocrat'?... It is not a matter of descent or even of wealth, but here one's tax return is like a patent of nobility in Europe. Hotels in the middle of a sea of sand. On a pale-green lawn, sprinkled with inordinately costly water, guests play golf with all the liturgical devotion of members of a religious sect. America's great loafers loll about, glass in hand, on gaudy deck-chairs placed around the golf course. A Byzantine populace: their attire is not so much 'feminine' as unmistakably the liturgical robes of the priesthood of some Secret Religion. Money is Power—that's what they believe in this new Byzantium, not only in the strong-room canyons of Wall Street that is to say, but also in this Arizona luxury hotel, between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, and anyone who belongs to the secret circles of Power is a high-priest in the clergy of a pagan religion. Crimson slacks, mauve shirt, yellow morocco slip-ons, pale-blue cravat—that is the dress adopted by the members of this clergy, the Big Reporter, the Big Meat Packer, and the Big Electioneering Agent. It cannot be assumed that it is homosexuals who get themselves up in this garb; it is more complex than that. This is the attire of a mysterious masked game, the costume of the Great Initiation. What does it conceal? The complicity of Power. Just as the *quadrigae,* or four-in-hand, used to speed Nero along the Appian Way, so now three-hundred-horsepower limousines speed the modern Neros on the mirror-smooth American highways. The cardinals of this Money faith, in their mantles of yellow, crimson, blue and green silk, sit gloomily behind the steering wheels. A disquieting spectacle in this mass culture of the latter half of the twentieth century.

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When the sun goes down, Phoenix, that sun-loving Arizonan city, loses the magic of its desert brilliance and turns into a soulless American provincial town. By night, the modern city becomes frozen, like a lizard in the cold sands of win-

tertime. What does a provincial American think about at night? The day is taken up with the great job, with business. But what does he think about at night, once he has done with his bourbon and his television? How real is the 'perennial optimism' that supposedly imbues American thinking between the three oceans? There is still room, shelter and food enough for hundreds of millions more. How matters will develop it is impossible to predict. America's technological culture and consummate organisational approach will easily secure American ascendancy for a long time to come. They believe in the unconditional power of advertising. Do they feel comfortable with this?... A European proverb teaches us that there are situations when one cannot see the wood for the trees. Here, in America, there are times when one cannot see the trees for the wood: cannot see the Individual for the Statistics, the Little for the Big and the Many, and Americans for America. Every radio, newspaper and television trumpets, night and day, that 30 million people smoke such-and-such a cigarette brand, 40 million Americans eat or drink this, 50 million believe or swear by that... But there are trees in the wood as well. Poets must be awfully lonely in this neck of the woods.

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Houston. Over Texas by aeroplane: rocks and desert in every direction. Even modern energy production is unable to cope with the erosional character of the American landscape. In Texas, oil wells thirstily suck up the hidden energy reserves of the barren deserts. From up on high, out of the plane's window, the oil wells, along with the big-bellied, silver storage tanks, evoke the visions of Hieronymus Bosch. But then the oil tanks also resemble metallic marquees built to house some tribe of Martians. In the seat next to me is a young American. He has come from Alaska and immediately dozes off, waking up only when they bring the champagne round. He thirstily drains three glasses, in succession. He starts chattering, unsolicited, the moment he has woken. The cost of living in Alaska, he says, is as expensive as it must have been in California during the Gold Rush. He is now on his way to Mexico because "he had enough of the cold." These new-style pioneers switch countries and continents like "a feverish patient his bolsters" (to quote Kleist on restiveness). Far below lies Houston. Whilst the big plane circles over the airport, awaiting clearance to land, the passengers—most of them native Texans—good-naturedly sip champagne, play cards, and ready their things for disembarkation. They are quite evidently 'at home' in the America of the optimist, where nothing is impossible. Up here, over Houston, that optimism is catching. A million people live down below, on the edge of the ranges. This is the fabled city which has the reputation of being 'the most rapidly growing settlement in the United States.' The appearance, from up above, is striking: in this city there is nothing else to see than the cityscape itself. Every word on the advertisements beside the highway that leads through the desert from the airport into the city is screamingly over-the-top. The people

who erect these roadside billboards—the new iconoclasts, who no longer destroy 'images' but the landscape—defile the American country with their superlatives and childishly inflated attributives. Through the car window, at 60 mph, the traveller is informed that this is "the oil capital of the world", "the most cotton" is exported from here, "the most synthetic rubber" is manufactured here. The many superlatives are palpably meant to drown out some adolescent sense of insecurity.

The car whisks by a small, provincial cemetery. The burial ground is quite tiny because those who live in the city arrived here not long ago and have not yet had time to die. Yet the commercial telephone directory in the hotel is already almost as thick—1,300 pages—as that for inner-city New York, because here they live fast and with violent energy. In the streets, stunted, single-storey shacks squat at the foot of skyscrapers. Only things that are of use for the moment are tolerated here. It's not the detail but the whole that is important. This city, which planners immediately sketched on the blue sky as a *fata morgana* construction, limning a 'skyline' of skyscrapers, presents an apparition of concrete, metal and glass from which the concept of 'beauty' has been banished. In Houston there is no term to cover this concept, in its Aristotelian and Kantian sense. The city is defiantly, deliberately bleak.

Whilst travelling, the daily task is to see history in the landscape. In Houston, the 'history' is not the past—that does not exist—but the present, which shrieks and demands. Here history is not made by the soldier, statesman or adventurer but by the subscribers to the telephone book: the grocer, the oilman, the trucker and the engineer. The artist has yet to put in an appearance. Ornament is a disturbing element here, 'arrogant'. In the suburbs, set alongside one another in their thousands, are cheap, timber-framed, verandahed provincial houses finished with a skimming of plaster—all done on credit and thus overpriced. The owner, musing in his rocking chair on the porch—reminiscent of Rodin's *Thinker*—is in the process of working on his gentrification. Year by year, new social strata rise out of a working-class lot into petty-bourgeois and eventually middle-class status. Houston is deep-sea, the true, undisguised America in ferment, like a huge experimental display colony. It is untrue that the middle-class attitude towards life has been lost in a world of mass culture; ever new masses aspire to a middle-class standard of living, and the technological revolution provides the means to do that. The question is, whose is in this lifestyle? The new bourgeois or the new parvenu? Americans are much exercised by that question. These newly fledged petty-bourgeois Americans, in their rocking chairs on the porches of their Houston model houses, are patriots. But not nationalistic. The patriot loves what is his; the nationalist envies what belongs to others. America wants nothing from the world, yet there is an aggressive restiveness in this verandahed, petty-bourgeois self-satisfaction. In the fact that Americans have not yet responded to the world. Technological culture is not a 'response'. In the fact

that they have responsibility for a world situation that, whilst they did not provoke it, they often (short-sightedly and lazily) tolerated, despite having it within their power to pre-empt its dangerous consequences. In the fact that the meaning of 'permanent revolution' does not lie in a change in property relations but in a new civilisation that is built on human needs rather than Principles and Ideals. What is important about this experiment in civilisation is not the fanatical Ideal but Man, for whom a more human existence has to be fashioned—and today at that. That mundane possibility exercises the man on the Houston porch more than any utopia.

*

A hundred years ago, on the battlefields of America, men—white men—died in their hundreds of thousands so that Negroes might sit here, at the foot of the statue of Bolivar, as 'free' men. Yet that was not really what happened. American historians candidly admit that the White masses of the Civil War did not die for the Negroes. The plantations of the South needed slaves. The industrialising, commercial North did not need them; it needed skilled manual workers and tradesmen. They died all the same, because... But why it was always just a few people who declared the moral truth about a major interest? Washington, John Adams and Jefferson knew that the South needed slavery. Lincoln knew it too... And Whitman, Emerson and Bryant were all well aware that this need was morally bankrupt. Here in New Orleans, at the Rotunda, Negroes were still being auctioned off a hundred years ago. The Rotunda has now been demolished. What a frightfully complicated undertaking it is when people have to choose between their interests and the demands of their consciences. Yet somehow, 'in the end', a decision is always reached: Reality is always exceedingly complex.

*

Pascal on 'miracles' in which there is no 'mercy'. Harsh miracles of this sort do exist. The Pascal line about "We should not be able to say of a man, 'He is a mathematician,' or a 'preacher,' or 'eloquent', but that he is 'a gentleman'" has a resonance in New York. Likewise: "It is a bad sign when, on seeing a person, you remember his book." Both to formulate and to comprehend it, this sentence calls for a certain 'reflex' which pertains to Europe. Americans have trouble understanding that 'gentleman' is not the one who enjoys privileges by birth, nor he who attains or has inherited success, but the man who holds his own ground in all respects. In other words, one is not a 'gentleman' because one is 'a good writer' and 'successful', but one is a good writer because one is a gentleman, otherwise one would not write, because a gentleman does not try his hand at anything at which he is unskilled. Very few people understand this in America, because here everyone greedily tries his hand at everything, even when unskilled at it.

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Two aids that were still commonplace just twenty or thirty years ago have almost totally disappeared from the life of the average American: the maid and the artisan. A person of average income in the West cannot afford either. In their place, by way of exchange, the clumsy and inept have been granted a boundless plenitude of 'do-it-yourself' aids. Stores place the tools needed for every imaginable repair or cleaning job in everybody's hands, and with these aids even the incompetent may plane floorboards, paint a room, frame a picture, wire a light... The Great Novelty of this age is not just the Spaceship but the robot paraphernalia that have materialised in place of the maid and the artisan.

1964

New York.—Jury duty for two weeks, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. One hundred and twenty of us jurors who have been called are in the assembly chamber at the New York Civil Court. The chamber is air-conditioned, and one may smoke and read. It is forbidden to speak with strangers or witnesses; the jurors' behaviour comes under hawk-eyed scrutiny from lawyers. The twelve jurors due to decide on a case are put up by an official drawing lots. The lawyers examine each juror to determine whether they are 'prejudiced'; some are objected to.

Most of the legal actions are petty affairs—reneging on promises, breaches of contract. Always, obsessively, about money—when, where, why not more... Then a suit for damages that lasts for four days. This is a regular soap opera, as they say here, a Beggar's Opera. Entitled *Leon and the Woman*.

Leon, a thirty-two-year old who cuts a fine figure, is an aggressive, arrogant spiv; a wholesaler who owns a Cadillac. He was engaged to marry a blonde, blue-eyed 23-year-old innocent, but it was broken off, and Leon is sueing for return of the three-carat diamond engagement ring. The young man is no gentleman, but it turns out that the maiden is no lady either. She sobs unabashedly in front of twelve complete strangers, yelling out between the sobs that on the farewell evening, when the engagement broke up (Leon had second thoughts), in the Cadillac going home "he touched the private part of my body..." In short, she is not prepared to return the ring. Everyone keeps a straight face, judge and we, the jury. It goes on like this for four days; the maiden's parents are demanding ten thousand dollars in compensation from Leon, because the Cadillac incident had "ruined the girl's nerves." Leon clutches his head in his hands and stares before him, as if he were only now starting to grasp how rash he had been to lose his self-control in the Cadillac. The drama-queen mother, a petty-bourgeois woman in garish blue and canary yellow, who is past the first bloom of life, mimes a heart attack until the judge ticks her off. In the end, we bring a judgement of Solomon. After an hour and a half of deliberation, the decision is "given is given": the man did not behave in a "gentlemanlike" way, but the

maiden was not "ladylike" either; the girl may keep the ring, but the touching of her "private parts" does not call for compensation from Leon. There are ten male jurors, including one Negro, the other two are women. The men were unanimous in determining that Leon had been rash in the car, but it did not amount to ten thousand dollars (a sort of 'what-would-things-come-to' grumble is heard from the jury chorus in the course of the deliberations). The women sullenly hold their tongues, they have a different opinion.

The figures are of more interest than the low comedy: the complainant is no "lady", she merely puts on an act of being that... She is tow-headed, her hands, legs, figure, smile and everything about her speaks of that immature type, without sexual attributes to speak of and incapable of expressing them, that is to be seen in magazines and in advertisements in cinemas and television shows. It is incomprehensible that Leon did not see that: American men have heard about the vamp, the glamour girl, the business woman and the country girl, but Woman is still an unsettlingly strange quantity for them, as it was in the days of the Puritans and pioneers.

The air of a Kafkaesque trial in the big building: noiseless doors, everyone suspicious. The scent of Money mania in everything and everywhere. At least here, in New York, it is undisguised. Anyone who has money is not just rich but good-looking, virile, young, clever, cheerful, heroic—and all because he has money. So most people believe. Then there are the rebels who splutteringly deny this. Avarice, crude and ruthless money-grubbing are just as prevalent in Europe, but only few admit their ravenous hunger.

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In one New York borough a young woman was knifed to death during the early hours of the morning. Neighbours were quick to hurry to windows on hearing the victim's screams, but no one phoned the police. The police questioned those living in the area, who admitted—thirty-seven of them!—to having watched from the window as the killer finished off his screaming victim, but they did not lift the telephone because "they were scared to interfere". The police took note of this "cowardly indifference" with outrage. Still, New Yorkers are hardly alone in their indifference... When the Russian Bolsheviks butchered the Hungarian revolution in Budapest, in November 1956, the neighbours—French, British, American—rested their elbows on their window sills and tut-tutted, but they carried on watching the tragedy without lifting a finger. Nobody telephoned in to announce that what was being murdered before the world's eyes and was in need of assistance was innocent. Why? Probably because "they were scared to interfere".

1965

Washington. The gigantic small town is full of flowers. By ten o'clock in the morning there is already a kilometre-long queue along the White House fence, waiting to be admitted. This column of American tourists, who have the patience of saints, streams in a double line into the magically charmed building from ten until noon. An average of twenty thousand people every day scurry through the official ceremonial halls of America's (brief) history, the spacious chambers designated as the State Dinner Room, the Blue Room and the East Room. The furnishings are simple, but they have a certain—citoyen—dignity. After the royal palaces of Europe, French, Italian and Spanish, it comes as a relief that in the White House there is none of the museum coldness or gilded stage bric-à-brac that there is over there... A great Empire is cautiously, modestly establishing traditions in these rooms.

*

What does 'writing' mean?... What was I actually seeking to do when, every now and then, I sat down in front of a sheet of paper and 'wrote' something?... The question has a grotesquely immediate point to it, coming as it does at the end of a career (if writing can be called a 'career'...). Why does a person 'write'? He wants to say something to other people, but what? Speaking personally, I sometimes think that one must protest and rebel the moment anybody (or anybodies) seek to create System out of the natural, living order of life. Everything that is System—religious, political, economic or intellectual System—is a deadly danger and threat to life's living order. I think that's what I wanted to say when I 'wrote'. Others write about other things, but every writer has something to say that is his alone, and he speaks eternally about that, in a hundred volumes, a hundred different ways.

*

Confused dreams. Every dream—a moment when the madman who resides within us is liberated in the consciousness. During the hours of wakefulness this madman is watched over by nurses, that is say, Reason, Upbringing, Surrounds; but those nurses no longer stand watch over a sleeping person's consciousness, and the madman, in the get-up of the dream, starts to roam around in the mind, gesticulating, grimacing, behaving disgracefully and sticking his tongue out.

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It is odd, to say the least, that amongst the hundreds of millions of American publications printed in this century not one demanding work by a single Hungarian writer of any significance has reached the American reading public. In the last century Jókai was inescapable; the great story-teller's works were also published here. However, not a single line of Mikszáth, Krúdy, Móricz, Babits

or Kosztolányi has been brought out in English by an American publisher. These writers have spoken in French, German, Spanish, Italian, and—yes—even in English translation in Europe, but American publishers have not picked up the works of this century's great Hungarian writers. Works by Hungarian authors which have appeared during these decade are academic books; literary works that cannot be mentioned in the same breath as the century's Hungarian classics; dross in the form of anecdotal, occasional writings; or mush for the stage and screen. No Hungarian novel or play that was written with any claim to high intellectual standard, however, has found a voice in America during the present century... Hungarian visual arts of the twentieth-century are similarly unknown: the great Hungarian post-Impressionists, Rippl-Rónai, Csók, Rudnay, Szinyei Merse and the Ferenczys—ignored here. Bartók was the first Hungarian intellectual of this century to make any inroads in America, but only posthumously; whilst he was alive he was passed over and had to kick his heels in the waiting room. The truth is that the major efforts of the Hungarian mind in our century have been hushed up, deliberately and successfully, in America.

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Foreignness—and everything appertaining to it, the sea of indifference above all —is not just a threat but a stimulus. Yet it takes a 'writer'... In a world of the neon lights, big drums and trumpets of intellectual confidence men, hacks, a 'writer' can do no more than attempt to enter into a dialogue, on the intellectual short-wave, with the few readers who are listening in, feeling and thinking on the same frequency... The 'writer' who cuts, like a laser beam, into the living tissue of life, modifying or destroying it, is always a rare creature, and nowadays practically a laboratory phenomenon.... A poet who writes in his native tongue abroad is writing for the very few..., but whilst back home the ideological big drummers continually bang on in the name of the people, the nation and humanity, the poet abroad learns what Emily Dickinson meant when she said something like: "If I read something, and I feel an icy chill run from the top of my head to the tips of my toes, as if I were freezing..., then I know that what I was reading is poetry." A poet senses that more fatefully abroad than at home, where he has no way of 'freezing' because there he is surrounded by the tepid warmth of familiarity, a human and intellectual complicity.

1967

New York. The radio reports that New York's grave-diggers are into the third day of a strike; corpses are piling up in the morgues, awaiting their fate. It's like a man who is given a death sentence being granted a stay because the executioner has caught a cold.

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Mencken before lights out. Wishy-washy on occasion, mannered too, but he is always sympathetic and brave. He had no liking for democracy, because "a democrat has no means of being free"; he can only be "free" when he feels safety in numbers. The aristocrat, who is unconcerned about recognition by the masses, is still "free" even when imprisoned... But the plutocrat, whom the mob, in a democracy, installs in the place of the aristocrat, always trembles over what the mob says about him... Mencken talks with a preacher's wrath about how the first reflex of the man in the crowd, that 'hot-blooded mammal', is always fear: he is terrified of anyone being original, different, individual. Yet in its democratic, psychotic fear of minorities the mob has a need for a mythology and demigods to whom it may look up with dazzled eyes; that is why American newspapers hit upon the 'society gossip page', in the columns of which they can relate where the demigods amused themselves, when, how, and with whom. Mencken records those mythical, Cadillac-driving union leaders, the Socialists with annual incomes of a hundred thousand dollars—they too do duty as illusions of hierarchy for the man in the crowd. He had a first-class mind; there is no one writing in today's America who can supply such accurate diagnoses.

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These days there is no 'American literature', not in the sense that Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman and others were calling for in the last century, that is to say, a literature which would speak on behalf of a large community's continental consciousness of itself, of homo americanus's view of life. Instead, there is a sort of ghetto literature in which diligent writers describe the lives of American (Italian, Irish, Jewish, Negro, Hungarian, etc.) ghettos with pernickety minuteness, relating how they love and hate, eat and make love, make it and perish in the American ghetto... This contemporary ghetto folklore now substitutes in American literature for continental perspectives and picaresque romanticism.

The tape-recorder tracks of these ghetto novels faithfully supply voices for the figures; the only problem for the reader is that amongst the protagonists of these novels there are very few with whom he would choose, in real life, to stay in the same room for more than half an hour... What they recount, what happens to them, is literature along the lines of "write this down, Mr Editor, because my life is a regular novel."

*

In Greenwich Village, for the first time in years, this afternoon. The grubby, filthy streets—MacDougal Street, Bleecker Street—are no longer the meeting-places for New York's bohemian subculture but the official assembly points for its drug addicts. In the cafés and bars, in a manner reminiscent of embalmed corpses, trousered women with flowing hair and white-caked faces, bearded men in drainpipe jeans, with hair locks cascading onto their shoulders and, not uncom-

monly, wearing a golden earring. In the Figaro café I witnessed for the first time one such drainpipe-trousered boy-girl slip something, lightning-quick, into the back pocket of another ephebe—presumably heroin or something of the kind. These youths are not looking for 'something else'; they wish only to exist exactly like this, dirtily and hirsutely, from hour to hour. What is characteristic of these youths is precisely the fact that they are not 'rebellious', only falling apart.

We are giving up the New York apartment in which we have lived for the last decade and a half, and for two weeks I have been digging out of it the few objects that are our personal belongings—books, prints—rather like Schliemann excavated Troy from the sand of Asia Minor. The deposited debris of fifteen years overgrows everything 'personal'... and not just articles but, presumably, ourselves as well, the personalities whom we once were. Here, in New York, the rust of a civilisation has coated personal life like the desert sand covered the cities of Mesopotamia.

Salerno.—I watch from the elevation of the *terrazza* as the Italian street 'opens up' in the early morning: shutters are pulled up, the fruiterer sets out his wares—the fleshy, fragrant, bountifully ponderous fruits of the Campagna, medlars, chestnuts, apricots and peaches, noble pears, apples, Muscat table grapes —whilst the baker places the fresh breads and pastries in the shop window. This puffing and blowing, piously assiduous Italian streetscape is like a toy that is wound up and the puppet stall-keepers start to move. But there is something else: in this area there are many Italians who have been to America and who have returned home to carry on what they have left off doing over there. Like the singing-school question in the children's poem: *"We've come from America, and our craft..."*—that is what this serious game is humming down below. The children's poem went on to retort with the tag *"Each and every one pursues his chosen craft."* That too is true. A barber strops his razor. A baker bakes. A cobbler soles. A writer writes.

Translated by Tim Wilkinson

(To be concluded in our next issue)

Ágnes Deák

Ferenc Deák and the Habsburg Empire

Ferenc Deák (1803–1876), "the sage of the nation", is a much less familiar figure outside Hungary than contemporary statesmen such as Count István Széchenyi and Lajos Kossuth, or even Baron József Eötvös, whom Hungarians have placed in their national pantheon. As a member of the great pre-1848 Reform Era generation, his life's work has become inseparable from the achievements of creating equality of civil rights and implanting modern liberal constitutional government in Hungary. Deák was one of the most distinguished leading figures in the liberal reform movement even before 1848 with his successful synthesis of the traditional opposition by the country's nobility to the Habsburg central administration and the ideas of modern liberalism. He became Minister of Justice in the immediate wake of the April Laws of 1848, but as the constitutional conflict between Vienna and Pest tipped over into open military conflict he increasingly took a back seat and finally stood aside. After the military crushing of the national uprising against the house of Habsburg in 1849, and with the government in Vienna trying to set up a uniform centralised empire, Deák's name became a byword for Hungarians as a symbol of their passive resistance. The principles of that resistance might be summed up as to have no truck with the organs of the new state authority, let alone accept any state post, but instead to bury oneself in the intimate circle of family and friends and keep the flame of commitment to patriotism, nationalism and liberalism alive there.

In 1859, following defeat in a war against the Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont and France, the weakness of the Austrian Empire's foreign and domestic policies was plain to all, and leaders in Vienna embarked on a tentative search for a way forward down various avenues. Eventually, from 1865, Francis Joseph was increasingly in favour of a negotiated compromise with Hungary's liberals. A key

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role in that process was played by Ferenc Deák, who had sufficient prestige to stand both as trustee and modifier of the liberal traditions of the Reform Era and 1848/49. The Ausgleich *(kiegyenlítés)* that was reached in 1867—with overtones more of "calling it quits" than of "compromise" *(kiegyezés)* the standard term in current Hungarian—was the subject of lively debate amongst contemporaries, and has been to this day amongst historians, despite the fact that it set the framework for close to half a century of dynamic and peaceful growth in Hungary, drawing to a close a quest that by then had been in progress for well over a hundred years.[1]

At the start of the eighteenth century, two lengthy processes in Hungary's history drew to a close. First, the entire territory of the country was successfully liberated from Ottoman domination, with the country now firmly united within the framework of the Habsburg Empire. Secondly, the series of anti-Habsburg uprisings that had as their goal the defence of the Hungarian feudal Estates against centralising absolutism came to an end. With the conclusion of the unsuccessful revolt led by Prince Francis II Rákóczi, an uneasy compromise was reached between the Empire and the Hungarian Estates. The former abjured a policy of open confrontation, whilst the Estates recognised the legitimacy of the newly created authorities. The Pragmatic Sanction, enacted in Hungary in 1723, extended the rights of succession to female members of certain branches of the house of Habsburg and proclaimed the principle that the title to the Empire was unitary and indivisible, while guaranteeing Hungary's separate status and upholding the privileges of the Estates.[2]

Vienna, however, justifiably continued to regard Hungary's separate status, and hence the co-existence of a feudal constitution (in Hungary) and absolutist rule (in the hereditary provinces) within the structure of a single empire as the greatest obstacle to imperial integration. The aim, though now eschewing direct conflict, was progressively to reduce the powers and political clout of the Hungarian Diet and the nobility's county administrative institutions, and to obtain an ever-broader scope for the sovereign's will; that is to say, increasingly to subordinate Hungary, on the pattern of Bohemia before her, to the central authorities of imperial government. The break-up of the Holy Roman Empire within the German-speaking lands during the early part of the nineteenth century lent even greater urgency to imperial integration, insofar as the Habsburg Empire still wished to remain one of the great powers in Europe and to strengthen its leading role amongst the German states. The balance between the Hungarian Estates and the central authorities wavered towards the end of Maria Theresa's rule and during the decade of attempts at centralisation under Joseph II, but it was restored on the latter's death in 1790: the feudal constitution reaffirmed the separate status of Hungary in all areas where the basic principles permitted political participation by the Estates. Where the sovereign's rights and privileges, collectively known as

the *Reservatrechte,* came to the fore—notably in foreign and military affairs, and finance—absolutist tendencies, with their integrationist aspirations, gained the upper hand through the intertwined royal (in Hungary) and imperial (outside Hungary) administrative apparatuses.[3]

Prior to 1848, all political forces in Hungary were agreed that the Habsburg Empire offered the desired political framework for a country which, lying as it did within the force-field of the two major powers of Russia and a Germany undergoing unification, would not be sufficiently strong on its own to maintain its independence, and its territorial integrity might even be threatened by the looming threat of Pan-Slavism. Little opportunity arose to formulate those fears before a wider public, however. The most explicit statement that we know of comes from a letter that Ferenc Deák wrote in November 1842 to his brother-in-law and one of his closest friends, József Tarányi Oszterhueber. Deák argued that the Austrian empire was an amalgam of many small nations that, at that juncture, were held together purely by the ruling house they shared. The other European great powers might consider the survival of Austria as serving their own interests, but that could change in the future. Unlike many of his liberal contemporaries, Deák was highly realistic in presuming that the Hungarian future was not directly threatened by some form of Pan-Slav unity under Russian leadership, though he sensed the lengthening shadow projected by modern nationalism. He thought the great western powers would certainly be unwilling to accept the risks of an unsuccessful war against Russia in the interests of keeping Austria intact. In that event, several new states were likely to emerge: a northern Slav state (comprising Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Galicia, and the Slovak-inhabited areas of Upper Hungary), a southern Slav state (comprising the Slovene-inhabited areas of the hereditary provinces, Croatia, Dalmatia, and the Serb-inhabited areas of southern Hungary), with the German-speaking areas of the hereditary provinces becoming part of a German unitary state in one form or another, leaving a much diminished rump Hungary. He even went so far as to raise the possibility that the whole of Hungary might be divided amongst the other three emergent states surrounding it.[4]

That letter eloquently displays just how pessimistic Deák was in regard to the possible impact of foreign-political factors. He has often been unjustly accused that his vision did not extend beyond the horizon of county politics, yet in his case the absence of reference to those external factors was a deliberate strategy. He was fully convinced that great power interests were all that counted in European diplomacy and that none of the powers was going to concern itself with Hungarian nationalist aims, so it was pointless basing a programme for the future on foreign-political relations on which Hungary was anyway unable to exert an influence.

"Admittedly, Hungary's Magyar provinces would be nothing in respect of their autonomy and nationality," he continues his train of thought in the above letter,

> but then Europe does not give them any thought. Neither in their size nor their political significance, neither in their cultural refinement nor their commerce, are they such

as to obtain the sympathy of other nations on these accounts [...] they treat us like fractional numbers, casting us wherever they see best by way of rounding off, so to say, the adjustments to their sums.[5]

Prior to 1848, for Hungarian liberals the basic law governing relations between Hungary and the Habsburg Empire was Law X of 1790, under which Hungary

is a free Kingdom and independent as regards the whole legal form of its governance; that is to say, it is dependent on no other Kingdom or people, but is possessed of its own separate existence and Constitution,[6]

which was interpreted to mean that Hungary was an autonomous state unit and not part of the Austrian Empire. In the course of the debates that were conducted in the Hungarian Diet during 1836 over how Ferdinand was to be styled as King of Hungary, Deák proclaimed:

since our homeland is totally independent of the hereditary provinces of Austria, and not a constituent part of the Austrian Empire, to imbed the title of King of Hungary completely within the that of the Austrian emperor, indeed to subsume it totally to that even in respect of how it is styled, is tantamount to insulting at least one external sign of our national independence.[7]

What he was arguing was that Emperor Ferdinand I of Austria should only style himself Ferdinand V when acting in his capacity as King of Hungary.[8] Hungarian liberals did indeed recognise the Pragmatic Sanction, though not as the basic law but as just part of the country's feudal constitution—and one that they rarely resorted to at that. Lajos Kossuth noted in a private letter written in early 1847:

We respect the Pragmatic Sanction, but any extension of its scope beyond the unity of the sovereign to the unity of the common empire we regard as treachery. Where our interests coincide with the interests of Austria, we are glad to offer a helping hand in order that a reconciliation of those interests be attempted, but in no case are we prepared to surrender 1790: X, and if that reconciliation cannot take place on some point, we are not prepared to subordinate the interests of our homeland to the interests of Austria; indeed we both desire and demand that, under those circumstances, the Cabinet in Vienna seek advice in its policy on the constitutional autonomy of Hungary, not its own absolutism...[9]

Under this interpretation, then, it was purely the person of the shared sovereign who linked Hungary to the 'other half' of the Habsburg Empire.

The liberals were well aware, of course, that the actual state of affairs embodied a far closer interdependence of the two parts of the Empire than a mere personal union. Likewise that it was to be expected that inasmuch as modern constitutional measures were to be adopted eventually even in Hungary and Austria, this would affect the Empire's traditional 'dualist' relations.[10]

In 1848 the Habsburg Empire was shaken to its foundations as it was forced to grapple not just with the challenges of modern constitutionality and civil rights but also the centrifugal force of nationalism. The national movements of the Slavs in the empire aimed at a kind of federalism based on either the existing provinces or the creation of new units, drawn up in accordance with ethnic principles. Hungary would not have occupied a privileged place within such a federation; indeed, acceptance of nationality as the principle determining the way the state was structured could be linked with schemes for breaking up Hungary as it then existed. After initial euphoria over a unified Greater Germany, German-speaking Austrian liberals gradually fell back on the notions of a Greater Austria, for as soon as it became clear that substantial parts of the Habsburg Empire, such as the lands of the Hungarian crown, northern Italy, or Galicia, could not be integrated into a united Germany, they concentrated on preserving the Austrian empire's integrity as their primary goal. For them, it stood to reason that under a constitutional arrangement the exercise of the sovereign's previous imperial and royal privileges would need to be transferred to a unitary imperial parliament and government, thereby establishing a unified, centralised modern state within which Hungary would be just one of the provinces.[11]

The Hungarian liberal élite, on the other hand, saw in the European-wide political storms of the spring of 1848 a historical opportunity, in the wake of the achievement of Italian and, particularly, German unification, to loosen the dependence on the imperial rulers and progressively to bring the country's true status within the Empire closer to the ideal of a personal union. They considered the Hungarian Diet and government as empowered to exercise the previous *Reservatrechte*. The April Laws of 1848 in themselves created conditions which, with the exception of foreign and military affairs, approximated to a personal union, whilst—despite reference to the Pragmatic Sanction in the preamble—the government of Prime Minister Count Lajos Batthyány saw "continued development" in this direction as one of its main objectives. They were keen supporters of a Greater Germany, because they regarded the creation of a unified Germany as an almost indispensable foreign-political prerequisite for a personal union. Vienna meanwhile, from the summer of 1848 onwards, as the balance on the northern Italian front, and within the European political arena more generally, swung back in their favour, was seeking to restrict even the autonomies secured under the April Laws, and this dual tension set Vienna and Pest increasingly at odds.[12] From the private letters that he wrote to his brother-in-law, we know how anxious and pessimistic a view Deák took of events from as early as the spring of 1848. As a minister, he personally was not in favour of Hungary assuming partial responsibility for the Empire's debts, which was one of the most acute issues between the Hungarian government and the Austrian political leadership, though in the letter in question he did not justify that stand with any arguments of principle but with the practical consideration that the country simply

could not afford to pay the interest.[13] He also backed the Hungarian government's policy on dispatching military units to northern Italy, for although recognising the defensive obligations placed on it by the Pragmatic Sanction, the government made its support for the Austrian force in the war against Sardinia and Piedmont conditional on a consolidation of the domestic political situation. He likewise stood behind the Hungarian government's line, as a token of its right to conduct its own foreign policy, of sending two representatives to the German parliament in Frankfurt am Main. In so doing, however, he strove to bolster Batthyány's position as prime minister against Lajos Kossuth, who was riding on the support and pressure exerted by the radical democratic faction. As one of the constitutional moderates, Deák was in the party that travelled with Batthyány to Vienna in late August in an attempt to reduce tensions between Vienna and Pest, just as in that September he was also a member of the National Assembly delegation dispatched to the imperial parliament in Vienna with the aim of settling 'mutual relations'. In the autumn of 1848, on the evidence of a statement he made much later, Deák would have considered acceptable a constitutional solution similar to that eventually enshrined in the 1867 *Ausgleich*. Moreover, in his view, the Hungarian National Assembly would have endorsed such an arrangement.[14] He nevertheless roundly condemned attacks on the April Laws. He took an active part in the work of parliament even after the King had issued his manifesto of October 3rd dissolving it and thereby accepted the status of a rebellious subject. Early in 1849, however, he stepped down, or to put it another way, switched to passive resistance both against the Hungarian political leadership, by then tilting towards the revolutionary democratic line, and against the imperial leadership. He had retired to his estate in Zala County by the time he learned of the 14 April 1849 Declaration of Independence.

Despite the promised constitutionality, the post-1849 era for Hungary was a period of absolutist imperial centralisation. The form of government introduced and known by the names of the Austrian prime minister, Prince Felix zu Schwarzenberg, and his minister of the interior, Count Franz Stadion, sought to use the historically unprecedented chance thrown up by Hungary's defeat in the War of Independence as a way of resuscitating some of Joseph II's innovations and so achieving a centuries old centralising dream.

Conservative and liberal pamphlets published in Hungary during the early 1850s fell back on ideas of the Reform era in the sense of arguing for the necessity of the continued existence of the Habsburg Empire as a bulwark against the perceived Russian and Pan-Slav threat. At the same time, they dissociated themselves from what 1848/49 had meant as an earnest of a personal union or of secession from the Empire, just as they did from the drive for imperial centralism. In place of a personal union, they advocated a scheme of federalism based on historical rights, though what they meant by historical rights was no longer a

claim enshrined in, or inferrable from, a body of law but one based on the power relations that actually pertained in the past: "...one cannot take into account more of the historical rights of the provinces than were theirs in reality...," wrote the novelist and liberal thinker József Eötvös, who had likewise been a minister in the 1848 government, in a German-language pamphlet which was published first at Leipzig then at Pest in 1850.[15] Precisely on that account, such programmes no longer interpreted the Pragmatic Sanction as a personal union but as a true union between two states, which would create spheres of common affairs in respect of foreign policy, national defence, finance and foreign trade.

Hungary's exiled political leaders at the same time clearly abandoned the concept of 'Austro-Hungarism' and, in line with the Declaration of Independence, proclaimed that the Habsburg Empire could only be maintained by force and would inevitably be split up by the historical energies inherent in the drives for Italian and German unification. They saw it as their job to win the backing of, first and foremost, France and the Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont to take on board the creation of an independent Hungary as one of the objectives of a future war against Austria. The alternative future, as they saw it, was a Hungary within a confederation of Danubian peoples based on democratic principles.[16]

Within this political force-field, Deák's 'silence' during the 1850s became a repository of the heritage of 1848 for the Hungarian political public, without his doing anything in particular. Even earlier on he had held himself aloof from modern publicity, the world of newspapers and pamphlets; with the Diet and self-governing county assemblies, the traditional forums for politicking by the feudal Estates, now closed down, his principal arena of political activity had disappeared. He ran his farm on his estate and lived the life of the Hungarian country gentry meanwhile becoming a living symbol of the nation's 'passive resistance'. We have no precise information on Deák's political views during the 1850s as all the relevant comments stem from later decades. According to the recollections of Pál Somssich, a conservative, Deák had doubts about the steadfastness of the Hungarian nation, he felt uneasy about its ability to withstand the maelstrom of international relations and the debilitating power of the non-Magyar minorities, whilst at the same time counting on the weakness of Austria and her leading politicians and on the "fickle whims of fate".[17]

In a statement published in 1867, in response to a public letter by Lajos Kossuth that was highly critical of the constitutional compromise Hungary was negotiating with Austria, Deák summed up the motives that had guided his search for a post-1849 settlement in the following terms:

> In our position I regard a peaceful settlement as more salutary than a policy that, alongside vague promises, and thrown back on waiting and further suffering, would pin our future fate merely on chance, possibly revolution and the dissolution of the Empire; on foreign assistance, in which one may be quite certain our interests would

not be the chief consideration; and on new and foreign alliances neither the shape nor the aim nor the utility of which is as yet known.[18]

These lines display the same deep mistrust of the impact of external factors as in Deák's 1842 private correspondence. Indeed, that negative appraisal had been further strengthened by the experience of 1848/49, when the great western powers had all given tacit assistance to the policy of retribution pursued by the Austro-Russian political and military alliance in Hungary. This is likely to have firmed Deák's belief that it was not expedient, but rather downright risky, to hang a political programme primarily on foreign-political considerations.

The second fundamental principle to which he referred in the parliamentary debate over the Compromise was the conviction that Austria continued to offer the most favourable framework for Hungarian developments. On that point, Deák kept faith with the Reform era:

> I don't know whether anyone is desirous of the break-up of Austria, but if there are such people, they are most certainly not desirous of our interests. I am anxious, very anxious, that we would not gain from that break-up, and our fate would not change for the better.[19]

Contrary to the standpoint of leaders in exile, he did not regard the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire as imminent, considering any such expectations to be excessive. Most liberals, as we have seen, expected the Habsburg Empire to disintegrate with the unification of Italy and, above all, of Germany. By 1867, of course, Deák knew that the dream of a Greater Germany including Austria had faded, with Prussia managing to manouvre Austria out of the unified state, just as it had transpired by then that although the advent of a unified Italy had succeeded in wresting the northern Italian provinces from Austria, it had not shaken the survival of the Habsburg Empire as such. He thus had cause for expressing his doubts. Yet it seems he was a good deal more sceptical than a fair number of even his closest supporters, including József Eötvös, about the prospects of the Greater German project even before the Austro-Prussian war of 1866.[20] Unfortunately, we have no hard evidence for this, but the fact that he was already seriously contemplating the idea of a peaceful settlement from at least the autumn of 1860 onwards does suggest that he was reckoning on the empire's long-term survival. Equally, it is important to stress that although, from his perspective, foreign politics appeared to be an area of unpredictable fortune that was little susceptible to influence, his outlook was not deterministic, for he also reckoned, and moreover said so in the selfsame speech, that

> the terminal disintegration of a great empire is not something that happens as easily or so swiftly, especially if its sovereign seeks the firmest support for his throne in the constitutional freedom of his peoples[21]

—or in other words, well-implemented internal constitutional reform would be capable of offsetting the impact even of unfavourable foreign-political factors.

Furthermore, even if Deák considered a potential break-up of the Empire as a catastrophe from the viewpoint of Hungary, as indeed he did, he rightly asked:

> What would be better from our point of view: that such a catastrophe should find Hungary in a constitutionally settled state, or that, drained of strength, we should be obliged to confront the fateful events in a confusion of ongoing muddling through? In the first case, we would be more readily and more surely able to serve as a solid kernel of a new formation; in the second case, we would be seen merely as disorderly material that, broken down, might be used on other edifices, and any appeal to our laws and our constitutional autonomy in the face of that would be ineffectual.[22]

Here we again encounter the previously flagged concerns about the dismantling of the country's territorial and ethnic integrity. There is also a glimmer of an alternative concept, likewise going back to the spring of 1848, of a vanished Habsburg Empire being replaced by a larger empire under Hungarian leadership. Deák still found it hard to accept the thought that Hungary had the strength to function as a self-standing, autonomous state. As he put it on another occasion:

> The majority of European powers are of a size and dispose of such substantial resources that Hungary would be unable to survive as a separate, freestanding country without a closer alliance that offered secure support. Fate placed our country amidst a group of great powers, any of which, the moment they believed we were crossing its wishes and plans would certainly dispose of us—those trusting in our own might—with its colossal might. And if these great powers were to fight amongst one another for any reason, it would not be our interest but their own that decided our fate, swallowing up or dismembering our homeland.[23]

He was more inclined to the view that even in that case Hungary, "uniting with sundry peoples, would form a new confederative state."[24] Deák was not alone in cherishing dreams of this kind, for his liberal colleagues shared them. József Eötvös, for example, noted in his journal:

> If I suppose that the Austrian empire in its old form and with its ambitions, the moment that Austria stepped out of Germany and no longer exercised any influence on Italy would exist no more; that into its place would step a new state, the natural basis for which is Hungary, and which, apart from our own nation, would unify the Bohemian, Polish and other Catholic Slavs and, at best, the Romanians as well, thereby resuscitating almost in full the empire of Louis the Great, securing the same role for the Magyar race as fell to it in its most glorious days, in that, along with unifying all the small nations into one great state, it should be the guardian of freedom and Western civilisation...[25]

On this point, of course, Deák (and also Eötvös) were implicitly taking issue with the plan for a Danubian confederation that Kossuth and László Teleki nurtured. Regarding Kossuth's scheme, all that Deák disclosed to Antal Zichy in 1862 was, "As for that, it's highly impractical!"[26] However, he later spoke more openly about this in one of his parliamentary speeches, to which reference has previously been made:

> If [...] we should wish to enter in an alliance with our smaller Eastern neighbours, we might come into such friction and internal strife with our own allies on account of our homeland's territorial integrity as to shatter the very goal of alliance.[27]

In other words, the attraction of the idea of the nation-state, if anything, might well signify a fateful threat to the territorial integrity of Hungary, creating insoluble conflicts of interest with the very states on which Kossuth—appealing to the vigour of that selfsame nationalist ideal—was seeking to build a new state. Moreover, in any alliance there would be shared business in which it would be necessary to act collectively, and presumably that federal link would represent no less of a restriction in regard to Hungary's autonomy of action.[28]

Deák's third main argument for the necessity of constitutional consolidation was that passive resistance to absolutism was sapping the nation and hindering socio-economic growth, which would weaken the country's political position in whatever foreign-political constellation the future might bring.

Thus, Deák remained wholly true to the principles of the Reform era regarding the developmental framework that was desirable for Hungary. His views in this respect remained unchanged from those declared in the spring of 1848, which he himself designated as the point of departure for continuity. He did not accept responsibility for the constitutional radicalism of the spring of 1849, nor was there any 'need' for him to do so as he had not shared its aims at the time. What he did revise, on the other hand, was his attitude to the attempts at personal union in the spring and summer of 1848. As he saw it, those had been prompted by the special and possibly unrepeatable international situation that had been created by the wave of revolution in Europe. By the mid-1860s it must have been evident to him that it was likely to take a long time yet before a comparably favourable set of circumstances could be expected to arise. That judgement was confirmed by events.

As his point of departure now he accepted the line that the Habsburg court adopted in 1848 in designating the Pragmatic Sanction as the basic law of the Empire, though in his case emphasising the bilateral character of the treaty. At the same time, he interpreted it as a basic document determining not just a shared sovereign but also a common defence policy, which could be derived—at least in the spirit if not literally, as he admitted in a later parliamentary debate—from it. On that basis, he declared as common affairs, first and foremost, the imperial and royal household and foreign policy, thereby implicitly demanding a constitutional control on foreign affairs. As for military matters, he offered a compromise, recognising the need for an integrated army and command but wishing to retain a right of final decision for the Hungarian parliament on such matters as numbers of recruits, the duration of army service, and the billeting and stationing of troops. He also wished to see finances broken down into im-

perial and national components, whilst expressing the need for a harmonisation of basic principles on matters of customs duties, trade and taxation. His proposal for handling common affairs was to have a joint session of delegations elected by the Hungarian and Austrian parliaments.[29] Despite the idea of a federal transformation and that of centralisation of the Empire, he stayed true at heart to the traditionalist 'dualist' principles of Hungarian liberals.

It goes without saying that the achievement of the Compromise was not the handwork of a single person, for many played a part in outlining its arrangements, including not a few Hungarian conservatives; indeed, during the final stages of negotiations his most eminent supporters, whom Deák himself had originally pushed forward as negotiating partners, made certain concessions that Deák found very hard to go along with when it came to giving his *ex post facto* assent. It was his personal standing and credibility nonetheless which mattered, these being the primary factors in lending it a moral and political capital and security in the eyes of the Hungarian public.

Confiding to his journal, József Eötvös characterised the balance of the forthcoming agreement in the following terms:

> Through it Hungary will be gaining an influence on precisely the most crucial aspects of political life such as it has never exercised hitherto. It provides for material welfare and an opportunity for intellectual growth to a degree that it has not previously been able to do. On the other hand, with regard to its autonomy, particularly from a legal standpoint, it will undoubtedly bring sacrifices, and in respect of those affairs which are of common interest to Hungary and the Empire, it will attain roughly the same condition as the individual states of America stood in relation to the Union prior to the revolution.[30]

In all likelihood Deák himself felt much the same. He did indeed abandon the abstract claim for a personal union that Hungarian Liberals had professed prior to 1848, but meanwhile he secured for Hungary an opportunity for autonomous action and constitutional decision-making within a broader domain of state sovereignty than it had enjoyed under any earlier dispensation.[31] ❧

NOTES

1 ■ See Béla K. Király: *Ferenc Deák.* Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1975.

2 ■ See László Kontler: *Millennium in Central Europe. A History of Hungary.* Budapest, Atlantisz Publishing House, 1999. pp. 191–207.

3 ■ On constitutional relations between Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy see László Péter: "Die Verfassungsentwicklung in Ungarn" in: *Verfassung und Parlamentarismus, Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918.* Bd. VII. Ed. Helmut Rumpler und Peter Urbanitsch, Wien, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000, pp. 239–540.

4 ■ Letter of Ferenc Deák to József Tarányi Oszterhueber, Pest, 10–16 November 1842, in: Ferenc Deák: *Válogatott politikai írások és beszédeik* (Selected political writings and speeches), Vol. 1. 1825–1849, ed. András Molnár. Budapest, Osiris Kiadó, 2001, pp. 342–346.

5 ■ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

6 ■ *Corpus Juris Hungarici,* 1740–1835. Budapest, Franklin Társulat, 1901, p. 159.

7 ■ Report on the Diet session by delegates Ferenc Deák and Károly Hertelendy to the Estates of Zala County, 20 June 1836, in: Deák: *Válogatott politikai írások és beszédek,* Vol. 1, p. 155.

8 ■ In response to the Diet's protestations, the sovereign did in fact consent to employ the title Ferdinand V of Hungary.

9 ■ Letter of Lajos Kossuth to Mór Szentkirályi, 5 February 1847. Hungarian National Archives, R 90 Kossuth Collection, p. 243.

10■ See Ágnes Deák: "Miklós Wesselényi on the Future of the Habsburg Empire and Hungary" in: *Geopolitics in the Danube Region. Hungarian Reconciliation Efforts, 1848–1998.* Ed. Ignác Romsics and Béla K. Király. Budapest, Central European University Press, 1999, pp. 21–40.

11■ See R. J. W. Evans: "1848–1849 in the Habsburg Monarchy" in: *The Revolutions in Europe 1848–1849. From Reform to Reaction,* ed. R. J. W. Evans and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 181–206.

12■ See László Péter: "Old Hats and Closet Revisionists: Reflections on Domokos Kosáry's Latest Work on the 1848 Hungarian Revolution" in: *The Slavonic and East European Review,* Vol. 80, No. 2 (2002) pp. 296–311.

13■ Letter of Ferenc Deák to József Oszterhueber Tarányi, Pest, 30 April 1848, in: Deák, *Válogatott politikai írások és beszédek,* Vol. 1, p. 520.

14■ Address of 28 March 1867 to the House of Representatives on the 'common affairs' recommendations of the Sixty-seven Committee, in: Ferenc Deák: *Válogatott politikai írások és beszédek* (Selected Political Writings and Speeches), Vol. 2. 1850–1873, ed. Ágnes Deák. Budapest, Osiris Kiadó, 2001, p. 459.

15■ Baron József Eötvös: *Über die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten in Österreich.* Pest, N. N. Hartleben's Verlag,1850, p. 126.

16■ György Szabad: "Lajos Kossuth's Role in the Conceptualization of a Danubian Federation" in: *Geopolitics in the Danube Region,* pp. 61–98.

17■ Somssich's recollections were included in: *Deák Ferencz beszédei* (The Speeches of F. Deák), 2nd ed, ed. Manó Kónyi. Budapest, Franklin Társulat, 1903, Vol. 2, pp. 396–397.

18■ Statement to the *Pesti Napló* newspaper on Kossuth's 'Cassandra letter', 30 May 1867, in: Ferenc Deák: *Válogatott politikai írások és beszédek,* Vol. 2, pp. 471–472.

19■ Address of 28 March 1867 to the House of Representatives on the 'common affairs' recommendations of the Sixty-seven Committee, in: Ferenc Deák: *Válogatott politikai írások és beszédek,* Vol. 2, p. 460.

20■ István Diószegi: "A Deák-párt és a német egység (The Deák Party and German Unity)" *Századok,* Vol. 104, no. 2 (1970), pp. 227–250. István Diószegi: "Ungarn und die Frage der deutschen Einheit im 19. Jahrhundert" in: *Ungarn und Deutschland. Eine besondere Beziehung,* hg. Haus der Geschichte Baden-Württemberg und Kulturinstitut der Republik Ungarn, Tübingen, Silberburg-Verlag, 2002, pp. 120–134.

21■ Address of 28 March 1867 to the House of Representatives on the 'common affairs' recommendations of the Sixty-seven Committee, in: Ferenc Deák: *Válogatott politikai írások és beszédek,* Vol. 2, p. 460.

22■ *Ibid.,* p. 460.

23■ Address of 14 December 1867 to the House of Representatives in its debate on the bill concerning the national debt, in: Ferenc Deák: *Válogatott politikai írások és beszédek,* Vol. 2, p. 489.

24■ *Ibid.,* p. 460.

25■ Entry for 15 September 1866, in: Báró Eötvös József: *Naplójegyzetek – Gondolatok 1864–1868* (Diary Jottings and Thoughts, 1864–1868), ed. Imre Lukinich. Budapest, 1941, p. 217.

26■ Andrea Tóth: *Zichy Antal: Naplótöredék 1862-ből* (Fragment from the Journal of Antal Zichy for 1862), *Aetas,* Vol. 10, no. 2 (1995): 119.

27■ Address of 14 December 1867 to the House of Representatives on in its debate on the bill concerning the national debt, in: Ferenc Deák: *Válogatott politikai írások és beszédek,* Vol. 2, p. 490.

28■ Address of 28 March 1867 to the House of Representatives on the 'common affairs' recommendations of the Sixty-seven Committee, in: Ferenc Deák: *Válogatott politikai írások és beszédek,* Vol. 2, p. 461.

29■ The full text of what became known as Deák's 'May 1865 programme' was printed in the editions of the daily newspaper *Die Debatte und Wiener Lloyd* for 7, 8 and 9 May 1865.

30■ Entry for 10 February 1867, in: Báró Eötvös József: *Naplójegyzetek – Gondolatok,* p. 227.

István Kemény

POEMS

Translated by Richard Burns and George Gömöri

Some Words on Blood

Valami a vérről

It's life that fells a tree in front of the coach,
Life that fells a tree behind it once it stops,
Life that confuses the horses, life
That pours bloodcurdling howls out of the woods,
Life that hurls bandits from their ambushes out for loot,
Life that cuts throats, life that gets
A good price for the coach, life again, more life.

Life learns from blood, researches through blood,
Does its testing with blood, broods over blood and peers
Deep in its bloody ways. At the merest drop, that's where life is.
Life loves blood, exchanges it for wine. So go and give life back
Some blood, jangle the bell. Life may still be asleep
But you'll still get either wine or blood for it, and life
Will come down and meet you at the gate any time.
So you still haven't got to know what life is, have you.

And you can't deny you love life. So go on, do something,
For life is leaving, running out, whipping up the horses,
Taking the loot with it, the whole ruddy lot,
Then sloshing it all over the place, having a ball with it

István Kemény
studied Hungarian and History. He has so far published two volumes of prose, a volume of essays and ten collections of poems.

And then changing whatever's left into background music,
Into one of those tacky old film scores of your childhood
Which life used to use, just to make a fool of you,
And that's how you'll end up, with it glued into your ears,
And that's how you'll die, fool, humming and whistling it.

Grand Monologue

Nagymonológ

The French will come to rule us once again
And splendid knightly orders be persuaded
To follow in the train of yet another
Lousy king towards the Holy Land,
Though he, en route, will stop to fight a battle
One would have thought impossible to lose
In which they, and their enemies, all die—
And what shall issue forth from this on earth
To greet the daylight? Well, there was a storm
Last night, with rain, and then on Tuesday what
The forecast said would happen, happened, and
The French returned to rule us once again.

When we say 'French', we really mean the past,
The Gothic, Ancien Régime, the Terror,
Each of which, unparagoned in its style,
Epitomised uniquely a modality
Humans lived and died in. Nevertheless
By Gothic, Ancien Régime and Terror,
We also mean the Church, the Courtly Gardens
And the atrocious gas chambers—although
One day these things will also be forgotten,
And that will simply be that, and then, suddenly,
The churches, courtly gardens and gas-chambers
Will turn alike into a sort of warm
Sunday afternoon in a quiet house
Sequestered far away up the Po Valley
With a monkish-looking jalopy in the courtyard
And the year 1938 will be no more
Than the year Mother was born, and the ladle

Used for serving at lunch fell in the bowl
And vanished in the bouillon several minutes.
Meanwhile a longish afternoon's expected
Though with no more omens, things having gone
Quiet for a change on that front nor shall we
Start trembling if, the whole night long, the foliage
Of our health keeps rustling in the west wind
For we have been changed back into a forest
And all that's left inside the house is the droning
Of a vacant screen instead of the sea and
Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
A big dark yawning alley gapes and nothingness.

The Fall

A nagy bűnbeesés

A hundred years ago, the ironsides
dumped sin on the shores of America.
Europe confessed, took communion, seemed shriven—
but all was not completely forgiven.
An émigré rebel, a hundred years old,
was sordidly killed by a common cold.
Christmas arrived, snow drifted in droves,
and petits bourgeois *seemed as* beaux *as stoves.*

In our childhood's pre-archangelic age
when we lived in the old house, before the fall,
we rummaged once through a private drawer
left open by Daddy, do you recall?
We weren't told off, it was Christmas-time,
but he had to pick it out of the stove
where we'd tossed it unwisely into the fire,
a thing which goes on burning even now.

The Bee-Keeper

A méhész

I have been a bee-keeper for six thousand years
And for the past hundred years an electrician.
Once I retire I shall keep bees again.
Something should hum for me, oh hum for me,
Hum and hum and hum
Just for me.

Elves' Morning Song

A koboldkórus délelőtti dala

Grow up and keep growing or we'll thrash the daylights out of you.
All we're after is some weirdo who gives us the creeps.
How old are you now, eight? In that case we'll beat the hell out of you.
All of the other kids—that's who we are.

And this is just our song for the morning.

We're a bunch of wankers, what this says is made for wankers,
So don't you dare go and put them down in your diary.
And watch it coz you'll be followed home all the way from school.
So you'd better keep growing or we'll thrash the daylights out of you.

And this is just our song for the morning

Whenever you take a shit remember we'll be watching you,
So keep growing or when you're ten you'll still be shitting in front of us!
All we're after is some weirdo who gives us the creeps
How old are you now, over twelve? In that case we'll beat hell out of you.

And this is just our song for the morning

You'd better keep on growing coz we'll grow even faster
And run on in front of you and wait for you with our own kids.
You'll get twenty years off without hearing a word from us
But if you're still on your own then, that's when we'll do you in.

Hide and Seek

A bujócska

I zoom off down to the hide-and-seek place
and hide on a step in the hide-and-seek stairwell.
This is going to be fine! I'll be a child all over again!
The light won't reach me down here
if anyone peeps through the cellar door.

My heart's hammering in my chest
because in this game it's not just children
playing the seekers but grown-ups too.
So let whoever-it-is call out ponderously, Thirty,
Ready, Steady, Here I Come. Well, let them
and if they do, they're sure to come down here too
because grown-ups peek everywhere,
peer into nooks where children have never thought of,
shove their grins into 'not-in-front-of the-children' zones,
acknowledge neither God nor humans nor monsters,
go down into the hide-and-seek stairwell and still
further if needs be, back down to childbirth and deeper.
If I were in their shoes I'do the same. So will they.

But the garden is huge with a lot of children around
so for the time being whoever-the-seeker-is prefers
to go on looking out in the sunshine, rummaging
behind bushes and picking up nippers
and toddlers. It doesn't occur to whoever-it-is
to take a look down here underground
where I'm hiding like a terrified animal
till all the other children have been discovered
and chant in unison demanding
that I be found out as well as them and
be shown up like them as well.

Gábor Lajta

Condensed Motion: The Art of Tibor Csernus

I was on my third visit to Paris but I had never noticed before that the sky was different from what it was in Budapest. I was hanging around in a marketplace, gazing at hares killed by hunters and at deep-sea fish, then looked up at the sky where the clouds chased each other in an odd way. In a sudden flash I was reminded of some of the mythological pictures of Tibor Csernus, with the sky as their background, where the ground had a heavy brownish-red colour but in the skies I saw the same wildly rushing, silvery oceanic clouds piling up. The conjunction appeared enticing: Hungarian earth with a French horizon. But no, things are not that simple after all. A painting is composed of innumerable, almost inexplicably interwoven artistic and life experiences. And indeed, do we really find, in the external world, at the spot where we landed by chance or by destiny, that internal image which is projected by the spiritual centre of our self? Do the "spirit of the place" and "our own spirit" really converge?

Tibor Csernus (b. 1927), a painter of international reputation born in Kondoros, a village in the southern Great Hungarian Plain, seems to have found that external spiritual centre in Paris, in a studio of the Bateau Lavoir, where Picasso and Braque once worked. But Degas, Manet and Toulouse-Lautrec also lived and painted within half a kilometre. Csernus must have received the decision assigning this particular studio to him, an accident controlled by destiny, with great happiness and satisfaction. And it must have been a great feeling to tread the pavements of the Rue Ravignon day after day in the wake of the great predecessors. Yet for Csernus, still haunted in his dreams by his one-time studio in Dráva Street near the Danube in Budapest, the real inspiration came not from romantic Montmartre but from the call coming from paintings, that is the movement of the arm of a Degas dancer or the steps of a Lautrec figure. For Csernus was always more inclined to enter into a dialogue with the roving spirits surrounding him than most of his contemporaries.

Csernus, who has lived in Paris since 1964, had his first one-man show in Hungary at the age of 61, in 1989, the last

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Gábor Lajta's paintings have been shown in a number of one-man and collective shows. His writings on art and film have appeared in Új Művészet *and* Filmvilág.

year of the "soft dictatorship". Before that, Csernus the exile had been a nonperson. He may have had a past but no present. While in Hungary, he was widely regarded as a major talent with a school of followers, yet he was rarely allowed to show. This despite the fact that he was a student of the influential Aurél Bernáth, one of the untouchables even for the Communists, who was respected much in the way as the composer Zoltán Kodály was.

After a while, though, Csernus left the protecting wings of the beloved and respected master. His early landscapes still show Bernáth's influence but his portraits, including *Three Editors* (Miklós Vajda, Mátyás Domokos and Pál Réz), shown at the National Exhibition of 1955, a scandal in the eyes of those responsible for cultural policy, or his portrait of the poet Ferenc Juhász already demonstrate a special gift for creating characters. His landscapes, reminiscent of Bernáth at first, also seemed to undergo a curious change, as if they had become melted by strange erosion. One witnessed the emergence of a completely unique, visionary type of painting somewhat in the vein of Max Ernst and the tachists. This was "suspicious" from the viewpoint of Hungarian "socialist realism", to say the least. The consequence was that while his followers grew in number, and his talent was recognised even by his enemies, he could barely earn a living, and his scope of movement became limited. A dictator-critic declared in writing that Csernus would never be allowed to have a one-man show in Hungary. Breaking out of the stifling atmosphere of his native country, Csernus chose to settle in the country where the central role of painting was practically unbroken from the Middle Ages through the Rococo, the Romantics and Classicism up to Degas, Cézanne and Van Gogh, and from them, up to our days. And Csernus, an innovator sensitive to tradition, threw himself into the stream of tradition. What would have happened if he had stayed home? The question makes little sense but the answer is still easy. Csernus would have most likely been too conservative for the upward striving neo-avangardists and neo-expressionists, and too post-modern and too "Western" to the "cultural politicians". Even the strongest bleed to death in the grip of scissors of this type.

Life in those days was not easy for him in Paris. Both his wife, a fellow artist, and he made their living for a long time by illustrating books, but they were at least able to illustrate the works of Zola, Sartre and Camus for the bibliophile editions produced by Gallimard. Csernus also produced a large number of Sci-Fi illustrations. The influence of this seemingly secondary activity has an almost unnoticeable presence in his later realist paintings, giving a mysterious, hyperbolic quality to figures. He gradually became able to make his appearance as painter again.

At first he continued with his "Magic Realist" manner, then bedazzled his audience, including highly respected art critics like Jean Clair, with paintings conceived in a relaxed hyper-realist style. Next, Claude Bernard, an influential gallery owner, entered the story—he had shown artists like Balthus, Bacon, Cremonini and Lopez-García—who had the good sense to offer him a contract. That was when the moment that the Hungarian painter, an artist with a surreally naturalist past, burst upon the international art scene. The timing was sound because, following the great "hunger for images" created by the neo-avant-garde, the rebirth of figural painting had been "hanging in the air" for a while. Csernus's hyperrealist paintings, which, in fact, had little to do with the painstakingly precise, mostly American photocopies of

the times, showed increasingly marked contrasts of light and shade. This was probably the kind of pictorial effect that called up Caravaggio in his mind, as evidence of the Zen saw: "When the pupil is ready, the master makes his appearance".

Csernus's name and his extraordinary gifts became widely known and recognised mainly for his Caravaggio-like pictures. In 1985, a Caravaggio exhibition was held at the Metropolitan Museum in New York and, in a daring move, the New York Claude Bernard Gallery chose to show Tibor Csernus at the same time. Csernus held his own in the contest, while the stylistic differences were more than conspicuous. Viewers could admire his easy-flowing yet precise technique, the liquid vividness of his handling of oil, the subtly distanced cool of his Biblical subjects, and their near irony, a very twentieth-century feature. It was obvious even in the close presence of the great predecessor, that the cold and warm siennas and umbers Csernus was capable of, or his greens and reds, balanced with a meticulous care in the harmony of tones, would have stood their own even in the workshop of Caravaggio himself. The American painter, Jack Beal welcomed Csernus in an open letter as a wonderfully inventive painter who is second to no other contemporary painter in his handling of the paint from which the shapes and the vision arise. Beal also thought Csernus had much to teach to American realists, who were treating everything in the same dry manner.

A good deal later, in a weighty volume of ARTODAY, in an overview of contemporary artistic trends, Csernus's art was given prominent treatment by Edward Lucie-Smith as one of the most important representatives of postmodernism and Neoclassicism and a re-interpreter of the old masters. Lucie-Smith emphasised that, unlike Caravaggio, Csernus avoided narrative, yet at the same time the dramatic quality of light and shade lost none of their expressiveness.

Much could be said about Csernus's compositions, and about his attempt at the recreation of Baroque composition in general, with odd, sometimes barely noticeable modern hints and references mixed in: a curious hairdo, the contemporary way a hand is held, a modern look in the eyes—like strange, dissonant sounds occurring at random in some works by Neoclassical composers. One might also speak of the convoluted movements of the figures, which nevertheless cannot be mistaken for the heroic gestures of Tintoretto's characters.

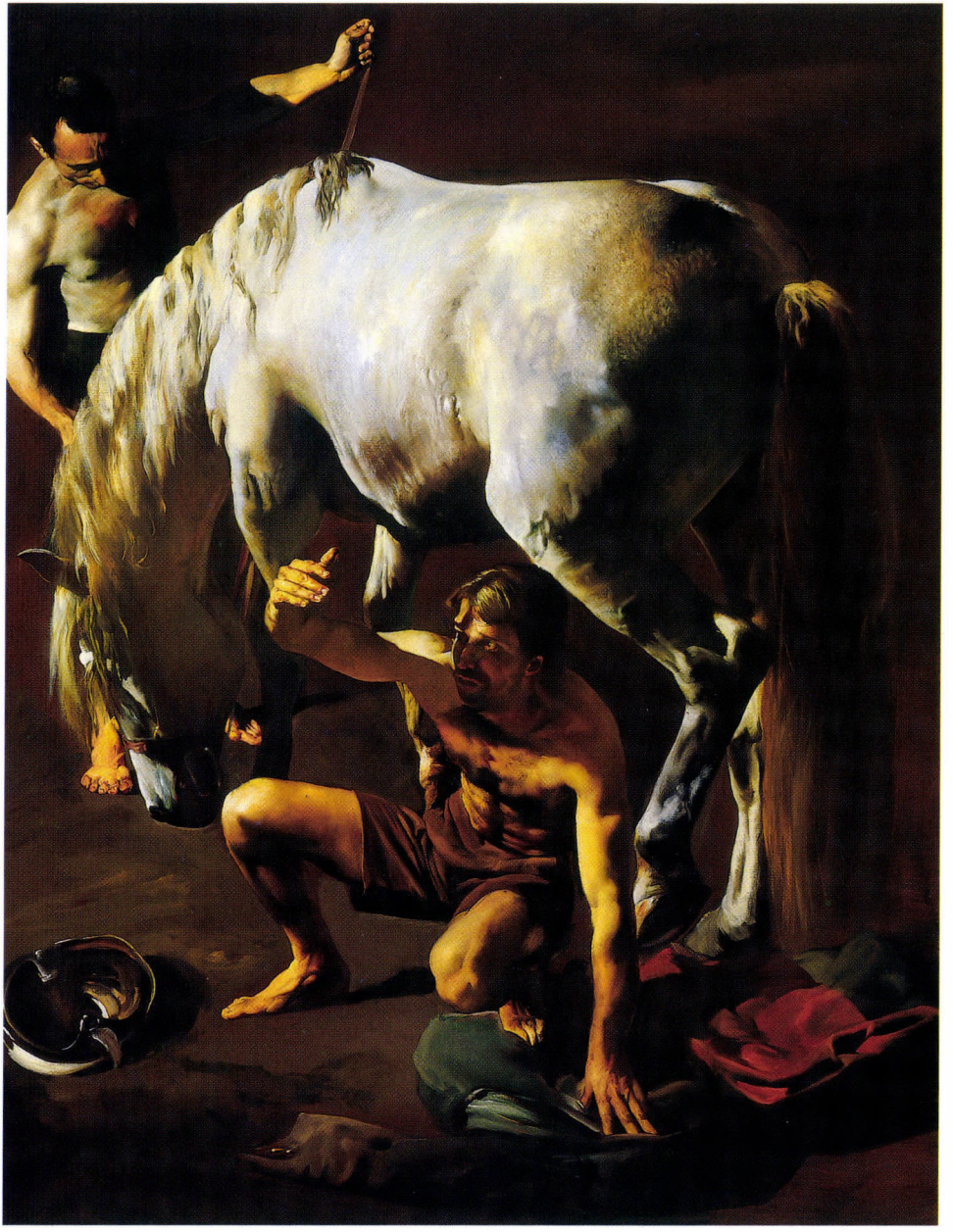
Of the many virtues of Csernus's art, I would like to pick out just one. In the 20th century, the kind of tone painting which reached its last peak in Manet's paintings dried up. Csernus's velvety values, referring subtly to a Caravaggio as "overwritten" by Manet, are most likely the only inheritors of Manet's "experiment" in the 20th century. The majority of the geniuses of the 20th century, from Picasso to Bacon, did not take that path. Those who did, like Balthus, or among the contemporaries, Lucian Freud or Eric Fischl, important artists as they may be, never achieved the ease of expertise of a Van Dyck and a Rubens, which Csernus managed to get quite close to. True, falling under the spell of modernity, they probably did not regard it as important either. It is only now, at the start of a new century that, as if waking from sleep, professional competence is beginning to arise, carrying new expectations along with it. It is not mere chance that—although this may be known by few, perhaps not even by Csernus himself—evidence of Csernus's influence can be clearly discerned in the work of some members of the youngest generation of painters, for in-

The Three Editors, 1955, oil, canvas, 110 x 140 cm, Petőfi Literary Museum.

Reed, 1964, oil, canvas, 134 x 152 cm.

The Market, 1973, oil, canvas, 130 x 162,5 cm.

Two Female Nudes with Bandages, 1981, oil, canvas, 195 x 130 cm.



Saul I, oil, canvas, 1985, 230 x 175 cm.

Without Title (Hogarth I), 1995-97, oil, canvas, 165 x 190 cm.

Without Title (Hogarth II), 1995-97, oil, canvas, 155 x 180 cm.

Hogarth (Camera), 2001, oil, canvas, 160 x 180 cm.

stance in Philadelphia (where, since the work of Thomas Eakins, vision painting has been a major trend). But in the meantime, while he is mostly known in the world for his work in the 1980s, Csernus has moved on, which is only natural. Art as such does not "develop", but individual painters, in their own way, may. Or at least they change. And Csernus has, for quite some time, wanted to achieve more than just fine pictures; he is broadening the range of what is regarded as representational art. He became more intense and more dynamic than before, and also more colourful. It is interesting that a growing colourfulness and light of the palette can be observed in the later stages in the work of many painters. Thinking of Hungarians, one might recall the later flowering of Rippl-Rónai, Egry or Czóbel. Csernus's themes have also been changing: for nearly ten years, he has been at work on an imposing series in the wake of William Hogarth's etchings, but in this particular time travel, Hogarth seems to have joined forces with Italian *settecento* masters, and it also appears that he is being supported in his work by the spatial inventions of Degas and Lautrec as well as the colours of Cézanne. But the time trip is led by Csernus; he is pulling the strings.

Surrounded by artistic forerunners as he is, Tibor Csernus is nevertheless moving increasingly farther away from evoking styles. His mind is engaged by new problems such as, for instance, the question as to what he sees in a given space in which his figures are moving, and how he sees it. And taking a real good look at something may be the same thing as seeing it for the first time. Where another painter can provide no help at all. For this reason he is now taking greater risks, but this kind of risk-taking is no longer equal to experimenting, like when he was testing his tools. It is more as if he were testing his own power. How far can he go without giving up the illusion of representation yet stretching he web of illusion to the utmost? In other words, he is not only looking at things but also allows a deeper reality to seep through the chinks in the paint marks. That is why Csernus's occasionally wild brush strokes in the manner of gesture painters, or his scratching off the paint like the tacheists, are never self-serving. In possession of a vast amount of experience, he uses the idiom of painting even more sharply and with greater precision than before. He goes over the same form twenty or thirty times when needed. He clears it away and paints it over. The calligraphic paint marks made with a flexible ox hair brush are perhaps even sharper and more precise than the more elaborate, better dispersed shapes used to be in his earlier pictures. Still, Csernus never was a painfully dry realist. Even his hyperrealistic pictures show a brilliant wit and sensuality. When taking a closer look, we can see the full calligraphy of brush strokes, deletions and scratches. Photographs and imitations of photographs disintegrate into meaningless particles or pixels when we move closer. But when we zoom in on the microcosm of Csernus's pictorial shape, it will turn into a macrocosm.

Csernus's recent paintings recall the "best" brush strokes of the abstract expressionists (Diebenkorn, Philip Guston, de Kooning), but he also stubbornly insists that the complete canvas shows a fully visible human space. Nor does he relinquish the rendering of materials and textures, which the above-mentioned painters were forced to leave out. And by doing so they also abandoned the atmosphere, just as the cubists following Cézanne suctioned off the air of the wet landscapes, hammering out a new kind of tin sky for themselves instead. In Cézanne's pictures—as

well as in those by Csernus—the air is still there. When Csernus paints the Place Émile Godeau ("I felt I owed that square that much", he says), the sunshine still evokes the Impressionists. He looks far behind, as far as the Renaissance at times, but he lives his life in the present. The eroded surfaces, the splashes of paint, the gripping of elusive shapes as if caught in flight: these are his and his alone.

Talking about elusive shapes: indeed, Csernus is probably better at "catching" movements than anyone else. His pictures are condensed motion. Those of his contemporaries, like Eric Fischl, for instance, are snapshots rather than essences of motion. In what way does a woman press down her skirt billowing in a breeze? How does a person count the coins in his palm? Genre paintings? Well, maybe, but genre paintings were never so strongly pictorial in quality. Somehow the story always won, even with Hogarth. Csernus's genre paintings are at once negations of genre. Painting annihilates life because it is the only way that it can conserve it. That is why it will never be flattering.

In the early autumn of 2003 another major Csernus exhibition took place in Budapest, in the Blitz Gallery. The twelve pictures shown are, as if it were, complements to the Hogarth cycle exhibited at the Műcsarnok in 1999, taken from the products of the last years. In them one may observe how the painter keeps circling around his favourite themes, how he picks out details from the picture in the making, as if he were studying scenes before shooting a movie. And he himself also appears in the paintings several times, just as if, embedded in the picture, he were discussing the next scene with the actors.

Entering the picture is not merely a symbolic gesture. Comparing the painter's earlier pictures with recent ones, it becomes conspicuous that those were more like windows in the sense of classical painting; that is, the actual scene was taking place behind the picture plane; nowadays it breaks through the picture plane toward the viewer with an increasing frequency, making it appear as if we could walk in and out through the picture. In one of the recent variants of the Hogarth series, currently exhibited (*Camera,* 2001), for example, the bigger-than-life figure of the film-maker in front stands before the picture plane, giving us the feeling as if we were rushing into the space of the picture along with him.

Tibor Csernus belongs to the eternally restless type of painters. His works always offer new spiritual thrills. And since in recent years his presence and influence have been increasingly felt in Hungary too, he is, after an absence of 40 years, once again regarded as a school-creating master in his homeland. ❧

Szilárd Podmaniczky

Happy Birthday to You

(Short story)

I had yet to open my eyes. The eiderdown was sweltering and light; weights were chasing each other around in my head, as if I were picking up the pulses of my blood circulation. A dull ache had settled on the nape of my neck. If I opened my eyes, I knew I would feel dizzy. I tried to go back to sleep: an hour or two can be a bonus, sparing the first, most horrendous stage of sobering-up, when nothing is where it should be, when even the faintest spark of strength has gone, when every movement takes five times as much energy and concentration, and it'd be no surprise at all if, one of these days, at a time like this, the world were to split in two.

With the first move I made, to drink a glass of water perhaps and down an aspirin, a blast of cold air slipped under the bedclothes. I shuddered and shivered. Then a wave of heat surged through me, and I was drenched in sweat. I lifted the bedclothes a few times with my legs, the better to shiver and perspire, to sweat out the toxins. With each fresh wave of heat, I imagined the crumminess seeping out of me into the eiderdown, and when the bulk of that had made the transfer I would jump out from under the eiderdown.

I caught a whiff of a peculiar odour, a smell of musty whitewash and clothes; the floor radiated coldness.

We had been three days into celebrating my birthday; that's how it's been for years now, and if I can last this out, it really is like being born again.

I had left my apartment along with others on the first night; we were all wide awake, bar the odd lapse, and traipsing from one place on to the next. After the third day, the very idea of the smell of fish-soup that had been left in my kitchen was scary. Eventually I'd pull myself together somewhere, maybe here, and go

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back home. I couldn't take any more; last night in the rain I was already starting to see tiny, iridescent pixies in the light of the street lamps.

After a while I felt a bit better and opened my eyes a fraction. It was still dark in the room; I could hear the sound of a car, the headlights sweeping stripes of brightness around the room through the gaps in the blinds. I did not budge. More and more cars came by: must be getting on for dawn, I thought to myself. I was lying a couple of yards from the window. My eyes were rheumy and stung; the stripes from the cars swam, as if there were a herd of zebra clattering around the walls. I'm used to living in a multistorey house, and you don't often see that kind of thing there, I thought to myself, then right after that I thought where on earth I could be, another fine mess.

I was bracing myself to sit up and drink a glass of water when something flicked the back of my neck. As if I had dreamed it. I didn't move a muscle. The slight weight of the something lingered on my neck. It was as though some creature were trying to enter my head, just at the point where the dull ache was throbbing. I gingerly drew back and turned over. I was lying in a twin bed, and there was somebody sleeping beside me; only the top of the head was showing, the hair spread in clumps on the pillow, and a long arm, the fingertips of which had slipped onto the nape of my neck.

I clambered out of bed. It was daybreak already, and it could have been no more than a few degrees above freezing in the room. I found my clothes at the foot of the bed and dressed, but I could not find my briefcase.

The place was unfamiliar but that did not surprise me; I was used to that sort of thing by now and merely thought to myself, another fine mess...

I went out of the room and in the kitchen drank some water and rinsed my face. From the kitchen window I was able to look out on a yard in which stood piles of dry, chopped-up trees and beside them a smallish fruit tree—cherry, perhaps. The sky was overcast and an autumn mist spilled down the bole of the tree. I stepped out into the yard to take a breath of fresh air. A man greeted me from next door, and I returned the greeting.

I went into the house to look for my briefcase and push off home. It grew lighter whilst I was searching. The somebody in the bed stirred, pulled down the bedclothes from over its head, but did not open its eyes. An old man. He was champing, trying to swallow his spittle. My fear suddenly pervaded the whole house. I had no idea how I had come to be there, or who the old man I had slept next to might be. I attempted to retrieve the last image from my memory, but I could no longer put even a day on what I did remember.

With a great effort, the old chap twisted halfway round in the bed, and said something in a high-pitched voice, almost whistling and whining: "You've come?"

I didn't know whether he was just talking to himself or I was also expected to answer. I felt diabolical. I dithered a bit longer on account of my briefcase before deciding that it didn't matter, the main thing was to clear off. No sooner had I made

up my mind, though, when a car drew up under the window and its headlights switched off. I started to sweat again in my clammy and stinking clothes. I was so jumpy that I trembled all over. It was too late now to make a bolt from the house. I have to hide, I thought to myself. But the whole house was made up by just two bare rooms; there was nowhere to go. I looked out of the window: it was not a police car. I calmed down a little at that, but the next instant there was a knock at the door. Having tidied my clothes and also my hair, there was nothing for it but to open the door. Good morning, said the man in yellow overalls, a doctor's bag in one hand. Good morning, doctor, I replied, come in. How is the old fellow, he asked. Well..., I said, but without waiting for an answer the doctor went straight into the room and pulled a chair across to the bed. You came yesterday, he asked. Something like that, yes, I said, and started slowly to feel my way into the role, or rather it occurred to me that I might scrape through if I were to enter into the swim of it.

The doctor examined the motionless old man whilst I hung around in the doorway. He set the chair back in its place, packed up his bag, then on the way out paused by me in the doorway. I suppose you don't want to have him admitted to hospital, he said, I've known him for thirty years and this is where he wants to die, in his own home. What's wrong with him, I asked. The doctor stared ahead of him. His internal organs, he said, he needs a special operation. That would allow him to hold out a few more years, maybe even get him back on his feet. What do you think? I don't know, I replied. My hands were ice-cold. The operation would cost a million and a half, he said. Well, what can I say, I replied. You know best, he said, placing a hand on my shoulder, then made to go but lingered in the doorway: try to get some food down him, grated vegetables or fruit, and fluid. Who took care of him up till now, I asked. I did, and I'll look in again tomorrow, the doctor answered, and he departed. I heaved a sigh or two.

I turned towards the old man, who was puffing almost imperceptibly. It grew even brighter in the room. I searched through my pockets to see whether I had any money left on me: just a few tattered paper handkerchiefs. I rummaged through the drawers, the wardrobe and the dresser in the kitchen. I found no money, neither my briefcase, just a few utensils and a threadbare suit.

That's enough of that, I thought, closing the front door after myself, then the garden gate, and set off down the muddy street. The occasional cyclists and pedestrians, having eyed one another, we nodded silent acknowledgements. It was even colder out in the street, with the wind going right through my clothes. I heard the sound of a bus around the corner and hurried my steps.

The names of two villages were displayed on the bus's signboard, neither previously known to me. I did not board, having no money on me after all, though I did exchange glances with the driver for a few seconds before he closed the door. I could not have explained why, or even if I could, there was no way he was going to let me board without money. I gazed for a long time at the bus's wobbling stern. Then I set off after it.

I contemplated ringing a doorbell and asking for some money, to be sent back later. I resolved to do that. I looked around: no one out on the street, then rang the bell on the wall of one of the larger houses. A dog scampered up to the fence and began mutely sniffing; it did not bark. No one came. I pressed again. The dog snorted. I waited another minute, but still nothing.

The fumes from the bus were still swirling around in the dank air. I carried on after it. I was overcome by hunger and thirst, and I was freezing. The road was on a gentle inclination, then after the incline swung round into a street market. I had already caught the smell of meat roasting from way off. In the market there were second-hand clothes and food for sale: loads of fruit and greens, and fresh-fry stalls. I searched through my pockets yet again, then thought to myself it was a pity I didn't have a wristwatch, I could get a thousand for it now. By one of the second-hand clothes stalls the idea of selling my jacket flitted across my mind, but just beforehand I had buttoned it up to the neck so as not to freeze. I was simply loitering, but then it occurred to me that if I was going to steal anything, I would have to be snappy about it, before I became conspicuous.

I half unbuttoned my jacket and made my way along the row of stallkeepers like someone who had business there. On one trestle stood piles of carrots and apples; the vendor was deep in discussion with her neighbour, before whose stall there was a small queue of customers for eggs. I lifted a few grubby carrots and apples, whisked them under my jacket, buttoned it back up, and dodged past the queue.

The icy-cold carrots and apples pressed on my stomach; my hands were so cold they had lost all sensation. If I were to leave the village, I would freeze, so I had to stay there, and I longed, with every fibre in my body, to get myself under cover. Without much further ado, I set off back towards the old man's house.

It was strange how much at home I felt moving around that unfamiliar place. I let myself in, dumped the stuff from my jacket in the kitchen then looked in on the old chap; he was lying there just as before, but as I stepped closer my nose was assailed by the stench. He had shit himself and wetted the bed. I dithered for a while: this was unbearable, it had quite taken my appetite away. I thought the whole thing over afresh; my head was clear by now.

I chopped up some kindling in the yard, lit a fire in the kitchen range, put on water to heat up. Within minutes warm air was wafting through the kitchen, so I opened the connecting door to the other room. Having washed in the hot water, I felt a great deal better. I turned the old man over onto my bed, wiped his arse, yanked the soiled sheet off his bed, shoved it into a bowl of steaming, soapy water, laid my own sheet under the old chap, then aired the room. Only at this point did I pause for a moment: how come the beds had been made for two? No matter, maybe it was the doctor, I thought to myself.

The walls soon warmed through, and I took the soiled sheet in the bowl of water out into the yard. I inspected my hands, and it struck me, for no particular

reason, what a lot of things they had handled already. I rinsed the carrots and apples, pealed them, and chopped them up onto a plate for the old man.

I sat him up in the bed; he did not open his eyes, though from time to time there was a flash of the whites of the eyeballs, but I could only get a few morsels down him, and three sips of water. He swallowed mechanically; I had to hold his head tight so he would not choke, and told him in a loud voice what to do: Swallow! Chew! Sip!

I went back into the kitchen and slumped onto the chair; I was exhausted. I slowly nibbled up the carrots and apples, stoked the fire, took my jacket off, then tried to gather my wits in order to work out how I was going to get home. I was not going to set off that day – that I was sure of. And I also thought to myself that anyway the doctor would be coming the next morning, maybe I could trust him, tell him everything, scrounge some money, and clear off.

The old man was sleeping peacefully in the bed; he was warm enough to have pulled the bedclothes lower down off himself. I perched on the side of the bed, and all I could think of was that time should roll on and the doctor come as soon as possible. My eyelids were drooping, and I thought to myself that I could do with a spot of shut-eye, so I cautiously snuggled back next to the old man.

It must have been after noon when I woke, but I was no longer alarmed; I was partly reconciled to my position in that I had managed to gain some control over things and I had a plan for deliverance.

Dusk was drawing in; the fire had burned down to embers, so I went out to chop wood. The dull axe blade had trouble splitting the thick logs, and in the gloom I was fumbling in the earth in the hope of finding something on which to whet it when my hand came to a halt. I sensed that someone was watching me. I raised my head. A shadowy figure was standing behind the garden gate. I tried to make it out in the twilight. Blow it, I thought to myself, I've overplayed my hand and come unstuck. Tossing the axe to the ground, I went over to the gate. After a few paces I could see that it was a woman, her oval face glistening in the light that was filtering out from the kitchen window. Good evening, I said. Good evening, she replied. May I come in, she asked. Of course, and I opened the gate.

In the kitchen I offered her a seat then went to fetch another chair from the next room. She was mopping eyes alarmingly red from weeping. At first I thought she must be the old man's daughter, but because she did not seem to want to see him, and did not even ask after him, I quickly dismissed that notion and trusted I would be able to carry on coolly playing the role of the son—at least until the morning.

The woman could hardly have been over forty, and if one discounted the eyes swollen and a mouth-line puffed-up from crying, I would go as far as to say she was pretty. She began by saying she didn't even know where to begin. I listened to her for about an hour as it meanwhile grew quite dark.

She was in a big jam: everyone in the village looked on her as a city tart, because she was pretty, and round there they hated outsiders; they were all sup-

posed to marry someone from that village or, at worst, the next one over. Her husband drank like a fish; he had plenty of money, farming a few hundred hectares with his workers, but he now did little else except hit the bottle. She could not leave him, because he would go after her and kill her, he had promised as much; either that or her husband's brothers would kill her, for what difference that made. She did not have the nerve to kill herself, and since I too was a stranger there, maybe I would understand.

I clutched my head in my hands. Somehow I felt unable to trot out that if only she would give me some money, I would not be seen for dust. That was clearly not going to solve the problem for her.

Come with me: bring some money from home, and we'll make ourselves scarce, I said. It's impossible, because they'll be after me, she replied, and from the way she said it I too sensed that it was too big a price to pay for my liberty, I ought not to take it upon myself.

We fell silent; she stopped crying. I did my best to help: what if she were to kill him, I said. That's impossible, I've already thought of that, it would be the end of me, she said. But maybe if you were to do it. My expression froze totally at that. Oh no, I responded, not that. I would pay you; he keeps loads of money at home, a million or so. I said nothing for a while. I can't do anything like that..., I said. He's pegged out at home, out of his skull even as we speak. Come with me, please, I beg you, help me. She stood up, opened the door wide, and waited for me to go with her.

I didn't have the heart to leave the wretched woman to her own devices; I thought to myself, if I were to go and have a looksee, she might calm down, at least until tomorrow. I grabbed my jacket, and off we went.

Her husband was pegged out in the front room, his arms dangling from the settee, his mouth wide open. The woman studied me curiously to see what I would come up with. She glanced from me to the fat, dead-drunk pig to whom she had pledged her tooth...

And what if it were made to look like suicide, I whispered. I don't know; I don't know anything about that sort of thing, I'm all mixed up, she said. One could torch the house on him, let's say, I said, and I began spilling out ideas, each better than the last, but with a callousness that even I found surprising, as if I were just tossing them around in a brainstorming session. Torch the house on him, I said. Or bury him in the garden. That's not suicide, the woman said. True, I replied. Or stick him into his car and trundle it into a lake. There is a lake here, the woman said, just over a mile outside the village. Then what are you waiting for, I asked. Help me, she pleaded.

We went out into the garage, inspected the car, and I showed her how to set the accelerator, the gear and the clutch. But you have to do it, I said.

The car had not been used for years, the tyres were flat. I snatched the pump down from the wall, and though my head was reeling from it all, did not waste a

moment. When I had finished on the first wheel the woman gently grasped my neck and stroked my face. No, I said, I told you you have to carry it through. She vanished whilst I was pumping the next tyre, and all at once it had come down to me: there was I, pumping up the tyres of the car of a total stranger, in a completely unknown place that I had no idea how I had fetched up in, with the old chap croaking back there, whilst here I was helping to send a lousy creep to his maker. I'll scarper before the woman gets back, I thought to myself. Except there was nowhere to scarper to; it was bitingly cold outside, and the fog was closing in, and she would follow me to the old man's house.

By the time the woman had returned, I had filled all the tyres. In her hand was a bundle of money, which she stuffed into my jacket pocket. Eight hundred grand, she said. For fuck's sake, I yelled, get it through your head: No! The woman pulled down the garage door. Pipe down, they can hear you. Afterwards you can do with me whatever you want, she said. Oh no, not that, I said in a more hushed voice, but the anger was undiminished, and I sensed the anger was somehow alleviating my hangover. If I do whatever I want with you, that would leave you exactly where you were to begin with, I said. That rat also did whatever he wanted with you. The woman flinched, momentarily lost for words, then still managed to come back: But you're different.

I did not answer. I took the woman by the hand and we went back into the front room, grabbed hold of her husband, lugged him to the car, and stowed him on the back seat. From here on in it's up to you, I said, and with that left her there.

The old fellow was still lying peacefully on the bed, puffing faintly. I paced up and down. It suddenly occurred to me: the money. There it was in my pocket. Eight hundred thousand, I counted it out.

It was well into the night by now; outside all was still, the sky had cleared, and the temperature had sunk below freezing. I tossed a few more billets on the fire, got out the money, plonked down seven hundred thousand next to the old man, on the chair that the doctor had used. I stuffed the remaining hundred thousand in my pocket, then started off on my way.

On getting out of the village, I started to jog to warm myself up. Every now and then I glanced back, so that if a car were coming I would have time to stop and thumb a lift. Nothing came, but after half a mile or so I grew weary, though I had warmed up. Then, all of a sudden, there was a flash of headlights on the road behind me, and my shadow was thrown a hundred yards ahead of me.

The car drew up alongside and the door on the passenger side opened. The woman was behind the wheel, with her husband in the back, just as we had stowed him. Come on, give me a hand; I don't know what to do with him on my own, she gestured behind her. Leave me out of it, I said, so it beats me how, just a couple of seconds later, I came to be sitting in the car.

We turned off the road towards the lake; the sky was glittering darkly on its surface. The car stopped in the wooded part of the reservoir, where a long slope

led down through the banking to the water. With considerable difficulty, we heaved the man into the driver's seat and belted him in. The woman started the engine and set it in gear, whilst I fixed the accelerator pedal to slightly more than idling and wedged the clutch to the seat with a stick which could be yanked away through the rolled-down wing-window with a length of twine.

All set, I asked the woman. All set, she replied. I pressed the twine into her hand and she yanked it without giving it a moment's thought. The car slowly trundled towards the lake. Then all at once the woman started racing after it. Fuck it, she shouted, I left my house key inside. She ripped the door open and clambered in: in the dark, I couldn't see what she was doing. The car was picking up speed all the while, and by the time it had reached the edge of the lake it must have been doing about twenty. Get out, I shouted after her. Just before hitting the water the car thumped against a hillock on the right hand side and the door slammed to; I raced after it. Even in the water it kept going before submerging. I ran up and down the bank; the water was icy-cold. Come on now, come on, I urged the woman under my breath. The top of the car vanished completely under the water, the eddies swirled slowly outwards, and the lake again grew calm, with only the ripples surging towards the far bank to break its surface. One minute elapsed, then two. I could not bring myself to go in after her. On the contrary, I edged away step by step. On getting back to the road and setting off again in the dark, I thrust my hands in my pockets and had a feeling that somehow nothing had happened. And the further I went, the more I kept repeating that to myself: nothing, nothing at all. I don't even know who they are.

It was still night when I reached the next village, or maybe it was a town. Two taxis were parked in the centre. I got into the first; a young lad was listening to the radio. They say the cold spell will let up tomorrow, he said. Good thing too, I responded, I've got a splitting head from this cold front. Where to, he asked. It'll be a fair drive, and then I named the town, pressing fifty thousand into his palm. Fair enough, he said, and I felt relieved.

He said nothing until we had left the village. Only then did he ask: Husband coming home? And he guffawed. You got it, I said, on top of which I did two people in and saved someone's life. The lad's expression did not so much as flicker: that sort of thing happens round here, it's a prosperous area, and fortunes easily change hands. But if you give me another hundred grand, I never saw you. I've only got fifty, I said, and pulled it out. Alright, he replied, then I'll say I only saw half of you—from the back, let's say. And he started to laugh his head off: a decent little caper at last. There was I thinking I would have to wait another week, he said. Though that one's a dead cert. Right? Get smashed out of my skull with my mates. That's when my birthday will be. Happy birthday to you, I said, and turned the radio up. ❧

Translated by Tim Wilkinson

Zoltán Nagy

On the Shaman Trail in Siberia

Halkuló sámándobok. Diószegi Vilmos szibériai naplói, levelei, I. 1957–58 (The Fading of Shaman Drums. The Siberian Diaries and Letters of Vilmos Diószegi. I, 1957–58). István Sántha, ed. Budapest, L'Harmattan–MTA Néprajzi Kutatóintézet. Documenta Ethnografica 18, 2002, 467 pp., maps and illustrations.

Halkuló sámándobok, edited by István Sántha, is a documentary record of the late ethnologist Vilmos Diószegi's 1957–58 journeys to Siberia in the Soviet Union. The volume is fully annotated containing much material on the tribes of Siberia as well as maps showing Diószegi's 1957 and 1958 itenerary, an annotated biographical glossary of leading Siberian scholars and a bibliographical index. The scholarly apparatus in itself provides a valuable reference for all students of the subject.[1]

The appendix contains four further papers. One of these takes a close and comprehensive look at the fate of the Archive of Shamanism, found amongst Diószegi's papers, establishing the present location of as many as could be tracked down.[2] The editor tells a sad tale of how complete collections can be broken up and dispersed, and the moral issues this raises, underlining the responsibility this places on the scholars who follow in Diószegi's footsteps. In the other three papers, grouped under an umbrella title taken from one of Diószegi's own books,[3] the authors have retraced the route he took, posing much the same sorts of questions at a remove of almost forty years. István Sántha deals here with the Western Buryats[4] and Tofalars,[5] whilst Dávid Somfai-Kara covers the Turkic peoples of southern Siberia.[6] The aim here is to pay respect to their predecessor's work, at the same time, round it off by giving an account of how it has lived on. Thus, besides providing a fine monument of considerable literary value to Vilmos Diószegi's memory, the volume also constitutes an indispensable reference work to the whole field of Siberian studies. It can only be hoped that a second volume, covering the material of the 1960 and 1964 journeys, will indeed—as is cautiously mooted by the editor at one point[7]—eventually see the light of day.

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The ethnologist Vilmos Diószegi (1923–1972) stood for what, at the time, was very much a minority view in believing that field work in ethnology could be pursued in conjunction with studies of Hungarian folk culture. The fact that the discipline had shown this dualism from close to its inception clearly had much to do with the fact that Hungarian ethnology was driven by the search for the origins of the Magyars, who had no perceived relatives within Europe, rather than an interest in the inhabitants of exotic colonies. Thus, at the time systematic studies of Hungary's own peasant culture were getting under way, field trips were also undertaken in territories, Siberia amongst them, that were inhabited by other Finno-Ugrians, to examine their cultures. János Jankó, for example, was one of the definitive figures in that early phase of Hungarian ethno-graphy. His books on the rural culture of several Hungarian regions,[8] and well as his essays on comparative Finno-Ugrian ethnography[9] are still indispensable to the present day. One might equally mention Antal Reguly (1819–58), one of the pioneers of Finno-Ugrian studies and Siberian research in particular.[10] In line with that tradition, Diószegi carried out studies of folk beliefs in Hungary,[11] comparative ethnographic research that led on from there to Finno-Ugrian, Tunguso-Manchu and Turkic peoples,[12] as well as straight cultural anthropological work.[13]

In his researches, Diószegi posed the same question that had long preoccupied Hungarian ethnography, not least work in the field of folk beliefs. He too was interested in uncovering the pre-Conquest strata of Magyar culture—more particularly, the pagan belief system—in much the way as Arnold Ipolyi,[14] Kabos Kandra[15] or, indeed, Géza Róheim[16] before him. Analogues of this belief system (the folk beliefs of the era when the Magyars entered Hungary), which he was able to define more precisely than all earlier investigators, were to be found, as he discovered, in the religions of the Finno-Ugrian, Turkic and other peoples of Siberia. In order to demonstrate those congruences, he elaborated a methodology, the 'genetico-ethnic' method, that was more exact than any previously used, and went on to give explicit accounts of it in a key methodological essay.[17] It was those aspects that very likely made him extraordinarily popular among the lay public, turning some of his books into bestsellers.[18]

In contrast to Géza Róheim before him, Diószegi examined the religious beliefs of the ancient Magyars more particularly in relation to the Uralic and Altaic peoples, establishing many close links.[19] The key elements, for him, may be summed up as follows. As amongst those peoples, election of a Magyar shaman, or *táltos*, as the person is called in Hungarian, was a passive process, the main sign of which was evidence of the 'shaman's illness' at birth. The *táltos* would acquire his or her powers or love through prolonged visionary or trance-like states of 'hiding'; then, before initiation, beneficent spirits would dismember and then reassemble the initiate's body, to check for the presence of the surplus bone that was essential to anyone's becoming a shaman; the initiation itself was

a symbolic ascent of the world-tree. Diószegi was able to reconstruct various items of the Magyar *táltos*'s equipment, including the sieve, drum, magic stick, headdress and the "shaman's tree". Amongst the *táltos*'s activities, he looked at the ecstatic or trance state and the fights they engaged in with other *táltos*es for the sake of fertility. He also professed to discern fragments of shamanistic chants in the refrains of what were primarily ritual songs.[20]

The early Hungarian ethnographers and linguists working in Finno-Ugrian studies engaged in important, often very lengthy field work, travelling as much as they could in the time available to them. Amongst the representatives of the first generation to follow in Reguly's footsteps, from the 1880s on into the early years of the twentieth century, particular mention should be made of Bernát Munkácsi and his field trips to the Udmurts and Mansi, Károly Pápai, with his work primarily amongst the Khants, József Pápay and János Jankó. For obvious political reasons, research work had to be broken off and remained incomplete with the First World War. The Russian material that Benedek Baráthosi Balogh had collected and which was stranded there, the work on the Ob Ugrians that Miklós Zsirai carried out whilst he was a prisoner of war, and the studies that Bernát Munkácsi and Ödön Beke conducted amongst Udmurt and Mari prisoners of war in Hungary stand as symbols of that transitional period. This was followed by a forced interruption of several decades until Vilmos Diószegi finally broke through the travel restrictions, to pick up where the earlier activity had left off, by gaining permission to make two trips to the previously closed Soviet Union, in 1957–58 and 1964, leading a total of three expeditions to Southern Siberia (1957, 1958 and 1964) as well as visiting Northern Mongolia (1960).[21]

Carrying on the tradition meant that Diószegi was not only the first scholar from Hungary in a long time to be allowed to travel in Siberia, but also that he completely espoused the field work ideals that his predecessors had stood for. It is evident even from this volume of his diaries that Diószegi considered a few weeks of investigation were sufficient basis for even full-length books.[22] By inducing accessible 'experts' to talk, he too sought to collect as tightly focused a body of material on shamanism, his main subject of study, as was possible within a short span of time. At the same time, his notions about culture and a scholarly approach were close to those of the Finno-Ugrian ethnographers of his day, a culture seen as composed of sharply distinct components (e.g. shamanism) that could be studied in their own right and for which the most pertinent issue was that of origin, that is to say, the general questions of how contacts, borrowings, cultural influences and constellations of ideas had evolved among different groups.

That goes a long way towards explaining one of Diószegi's underlying objectives, integral to his field work,[23] which was the establishment of an Archive of Shamanism. To his mind, those elements which pertained to, or were directly connected with, shamanism could be detached from the wider culture of Siberian

tribes and peoples and assembled as a cleaned-up, precise database. Those elements—written descriptions, photographs, sound recordings and pertinent artifacts (with photographs and catalogue cards)—were to be collected, in a single centre (Diószegi envisaged this as being in Budapest) that would then be suitable for what Diószegi saw as its true mission: that of bringing light to bear on every aspect of the subject of shamanism. Having worked up that research material into monographs on shamanism amongst the Siberian peoples (descriptions of the phenomenon in each ethnic group and studies of specific issues), the centre would then have then engaged in the same work for shamanism amongst the Native Americans of North America. Once those results were in hand, juxtaposition with survival elements pointing to the prior existence of shamanism amongst peoples that no longer practiced it would then allow the matter of how and where shamanism originated to be resolved.[24]

In pushing that plan, Diószegi did indeed succeed in turning Budapest into one of the world's centres for research on shamanism and himself into a leading light in the field, with his truly encyclopaedic knowledge of museum collections, and having himself done major field work as compared with most of his contemporaries, particularly those based outside the Soviet Union. (Diószegi wrote the entry on Shamanism for the *Encyclopædia Britannica.*) That field work, besides producing a body of findings which in some areas remains authoritative to this day,[25] also played a substantial role in expanding opportunities for work on shamanism by Russian researchers. His stamina and enthusiasm were irresistible, he created the practical openings and fought for the necessary permits. He also undertook important tasks as an orchestrator of work in the field, as in bringing together research teams on shamanism—'shamanologists' as he called them—in various centres to publish their papers in collective volumes.[26]

From 1963 until his death, Vilmos Diószegi was attached to the Ethnology Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, headed by Gyula Ortutay. From the latter half of the 1960s onwards, the custodians of Soviet policy in the academic field were no longer receptive to his proposals for further research in Siberia. In Budapest, too, for all his efforts between 1953 and 1972 in establishing the Shaman Archive of Shamanism, he remained the sole faculty member of a putative Budapest-based School of Siberian Studies. Disheartened and embittered at that exclusion, he immersed himself in the study of Hungarian folk beliefs until his premature death in 1972.

Diószegi's own research and those publications of his findings on shamanism that he was able to complete, cannot be ignored, so it was both a personal tragedy for him and also probably a serious loss for ethnology in Hungary that he was a long way from being able to accomplish all that he set out to do. Many are the key treatises and grand syntheses that he only mooted as possibilities[27], even his Archive of Shamanism did not live up to his fond hopes, being sadly under-exploited and eventually dispersed after his death. ❧

NOTES

1 ■ A comparable compilation was recently undertaken by Péter Domokos and Júlia H. Laborcz, "Jelentősebb finnugor kutatók (Leading Finno-Ugrian Research Scholars)," in: György Nanofszky (ed.), *Nyelvrokonaink* (Our Linguistic Relatives). Budapest, 2000, pp. 453–494.

2 ■ István Sántha, "Diószegi Vilmos szibériai utjai és hagyatéka (Vilmos Diószegi's Siberian Trips and Legacy)," pp. 411–420.

3 ■ Cf. Vilmos Diószegi, *Sámánok nyomában Szibéria földjén. Egy néprajzi kutatóút története* (In the Tracks of Shamans on Siberian Soil: the Story of an Ethnographical Research Expedition). Budapest, 1960.

4 ■ István Sántha, "Nyugati burjátok" (Western Buryats), pp. 423– 439.

5 ■ István Sántha, "Tofák" (Tofalars), pp. 441–453.

6 ■ Dávid Somfai-Kara, "Dél-szibériai törökök" (Turkic Peoples of Southern Siberia), pp. 455–466.

7 ■ See p. 412.

8 ■ János Jankó, *Kalotaszeg magyar népe* (The Magyars of the Kalotaszeg District of Transylvania). Budapest, 1892; *Torda, Aranyosszék, Toroczkó magyar (székely) népe* (The Magyars [Székely People] of Turda, Arănieu and Rimetea Districts). Budapest, 1893; *A Balaton melléki lakosság néprajza* (Ethnography of the Balaton littoral population). Budapest, 1902.

9 ■ János Jankó, *A magyar halászat eredete. Zichy Jenő gróf harmadik ázsiai utazása* (The Origin of Hungarian Fishing: Count Jenő Zichy's third Asiatic Expedition). Budapest-Leipzig, 1900.

10 ■ Antal Reguly: *Magyarországi jegyzetek* (Notes on Hungary), ed. András Selmeczi Kovács. Budapest, 1994.

11 ■ E.g. Vilmos Diószegi, "A novaji tudósaszszony" (The Wise-woman of Novaj), *Néprajzi Közlemények 1956:* pp. 58–77; "A palóc etnokulturális csoport határa és kirajzásai (Az égitestet evő mitikus lény, a markoláb elterjedésésnek tanulságai) (The Boundary and Diffusion of the Palots Ethnocultural Group: Lessons of the Distribution of the *'markoláb'*, the Mythical Evil Being that Eats Celestial Bodies), *Népi kultúra – népi társadalom,* 1968 (1): pp. 217–251.

12 ■ E.g. Vilmos Diószegi, *A sámánhit emlékei a magyar népi műveltségben* (Relics of Shamanistic Beliefs in Hungarian Folk Culture). Budapest, 1958.

13 ■ E.g. Vilmos Diószegi, *Samanizmus* (Shamanism). Budapest, 1962.

14 ■ Arnold Ipolyi, *Magyar Mythologia.* Pest, 1854.

15 ■ Kabos Kandra, *Magyar Mythologia.* Eger, 1897.

16 ■ Géza Róheim, *Hungarian and Vogul Mythology.* New York, 1954.

17 ■ Vilmos Diószegi, "A honfoglaló magyar nép hitvilága (ősvallásunk) kutatásának módszertani kérdései" (Methodological Aspects of Research into the Conquest-Period Magyar People's Belief System [Primitive Religion]),' *Ethnographia* 65 (1965): pp. 20–68.

18 ■ E.g. Vilmos Diószegi, *A pogány magyarok hitvilága* (The Pagan Magyars' Belief System). Budapest, 1967.

19 ■ Cf. note 11.

20 ■ This is not the place to enter into a critical appraisal of Diószegi's life's work, but any consideration of his writings on the beliefs of the ancient Magyars needs to take into account what has been written during the intervening three decades, particularly by Éva Pócs, who places her assessment of Magyar shamans on very different foundations (cf. her monograph-length reference article on "Néphit" (Folk Beliefs) in: *Magyar néprajz* (Hungarian Ethnography), vol. 7, *Néphit, népszokások, népi vallásosság* (Folk Beliefs, Folk Customs, Folk Religion), ed. T. Dömötör. Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, pp. 527–692).

21 ■ A summary of the trips is supplied in the editor's Afterword to the Diary (pp. 411–412): 1957—work on the Western Buryats and Abaqan Turks (Khakasses); 1958—the Tofalars and Tuvinians; 1960—the Turkic-speaking peoples of Northern Mongolia, the Buryats, Darkhats, Kamnigals; 1964—the Altai Turks.

22 ■ "There is no shaman in the world whom I could not definitively document with my tape-recorder within a week or two" (p. 123).

23 ■ Cf., for example, p. 61

24 ■ Cf. p. 22.

25 ■ To give just one example, one may point to his use of data on shamanism to throw light on ethnic issues: Vilmos Diószegi, *A szamojéd kultúra emlékei a kelet-szajáni népek samanizmusában* (Samoyed Cultural Relics in the Shamanism of the Eastern Sayan Peoples). *Ethnographia* 74 (1963): pp. 435–465.

26 ■ One example is: Vilmos Diószegi, ed., *Glaubenswelt und Folklore der sibirischen Völker.* Budapest, 1963 and Vilmos Diószegi, ed., *Popular Beliefs and Folklore Tradition in Siberia.* Budapest, 1968. Readers will find plenty of evidence of his organising activities in the excerpts published on pp. 63–82

27 ■ E.g. Vilmos Diószegi, 'Problems of Mongolian Shamanism,' *Acta Ethnographica* 10 (1961): pp. 195–206.

Vilmos Diószegi

Siberian Diaries and Letters 1957–1958

Excerpts

Vilmos Diószegi (1923–72) undertook his field trips in an era when, for obvious political reasons, the opportunities were extremely limited. The very fact that he was able to put those plans into effect at all was due to his legendary perseverance and a personality which subordinated everything (even his own health) to that goal.

Moreover, after the Second World War there was no possibility for social scientists of any kind to conduct fieldwork in the Soviet Union. In the late 1950s and early 1960s shamanism was a taboo field for Soviet Russian scholars, and Siberia was a closed territory for foreign researchers. Following Hungary's 1956 revolution, the leading Soviet academic policy-makers relented somewhat in that they began to allow Hungarian scholars to travel in the Soviet Union and set about implementing their programmes. Though hoping he might find ways of undertaking field work for six months at a time, Diószegi was well aware that he would encounter obstacles to doing that. That was precisely why his initial visits were more for purposes of reconnoitering the land. Despite not being permitted, in the end, to spend more than twenty days in any one Siberian village, he doggedly completed his planned fieldwork. Travelling around the Altai and Sayan mountain ranges, the Khakass Autonomous Oblast, the Minusinsk Basin, the Autonomous Republic of Tuva, and the western littoral of Lake Baikal, he was able to take stock of many Inner Asian small tribes of the ancient Turkic and Mongol language groups, supplementing his fieldwork at every stop with explorations of local museums, libraries and other reference sources, as well as establishing contacts at the scholarly and personal level that he was later able to make good use of when it came to editing his international essay volumes and to setting up and steadily expanding the scope of his Archive of Shamanism.

Diószegi moved around in the field with the help of research assistants. Although he was well equipped to interpret transcribed texts, he did not actually speak many of the local languages and so needed someone to accompany him and interpret for him. Beyond that, however, national security considerations dictated that foreign scholars be only allowed to carry out their work under the surveillance of an expert assistant whom Moscow either delegated from the centre or laid on locally. Thus, it was the individuals proposed by those travelling companions whom Diószegi had to rely on in looking for answers to the questions that accorded with his interests and notions.

During his first expedition to Siberia, in 1957, he undertook work amongst the Mongol-speaking Buryats who resided on the western shore of Lake Baikal and

amongst the Turkic Khakass of the Abakan valley, running along the foot of the Western Sayan Mountains. His local assistant for the Buryat studies in 1957 was N. O. Sharakshinova, who held on to their jointly maintained field records in Irkutsk, a copy of which was only brought to Hungary by István Sántha and Katalin Erdei in 1998.

The second trip, in 1958, took Diószegi first to the Tofalars (Karaghas) of the northerly region of the Eastern Sayan Mountains, a Turkicised people who are presumed in earlier times to have been part of the southern Samoyed (and hence Uralic) language group, then to the Tuvinians living in the basin between the Western Sayan and the Tannu-Ola Mountains, whilst also taking advantage of an opportunity he was given to tag along with A. P. Okladnikov on a tour of archaeological digs that he was supervising at sites about to be inundated due to the construction of a huge dam across the River Oka at Bratsk.

In 1960, at the invitation of Professor Byambin Rinchen, Diószegi spent more than two months in Mongolia, which gave him a chance to study shamanism and its links with Lamaism in the northerly taiga region of that country, both amongst the Turkic-speaking peoples and the Mongolic-speaking (Aga) Buryats, Darkhats and the Manchu-Tungus Khamnigans.

The third and final Siberian expedition, in 1964, saw him making a four-month visit to Southern Siberia, studying the small Turkic-speaking ethnic groups who live in the Altai Mountains. Again, a falling out with Diószegi's local assistant—on this occasion F. A. Satlayev—resulted in the Russian hanging on to their joint field notes. In 1995, Satlayev presented that record, along with the shaman chants that were collected then and subsequently transcribed, to Dávid Somfai Kara, who was therefore able to bring it back to Hungary. A section of Diószegi's own field notebook that relates to shamanism amongst the Kumanda of the northern Altai tribal group came to light not long ago amongst the Diószegi papers preserved in the Documentation Centre at the Ethnographic Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The notebook had been split up by Diószegi into separate sheets of paper, which he used as "slips" to insert at the appropriate places of his manuscript draft of a planned treatise on the shamanism of the Kumanda. Other parts of those journals have not, as yet, been located.

István Sántha

15 July

The days pass monotonously. I am doggedly and systematically looking through the material of the three museums here which have Siberian collections. It is now the turn for the Gosudarstvennyi Muzei Etnografii; it has 30,000 Siberian artifacts. I am copying the inventory of the collection from 9 o'clock in the morning till 6 in the evening in one sitting (I don't take a lunch break so as not to fritter away any time [which is why I eat before 9 and after 6 o'clock, which has also paid off in terms of saving money]), writing out the items—the whole kit and caboodle—that pertain to shaman artifacts. I must confess that even for me it is a huge strain. By the evening I cannot straighten my fingers, and when I go out into the air (after the day's work is done) I literally stagger. It's all the more difficult that I am working in the store room, so smoking is out.

22 July

I've cracked up; I just cannot break the back of the job, even though I've been slogging my guts out. It got to the point where I was simply shuttling between the different Institutes. In the morning I would go to the one that opened up earliest, then in the afternoon would transfer quarters to the one that started and so closed the latest. I did not go off to lunch at midday either, but even so I cannot get through everything that should (or could) be done. I suppose roughly a year would be needed to do that. I have now abandoned the idea of picking up everything; I shall take home only what I am able to acquire at my own chosen speed (and pushing that too a bit, don't you worry!). Yet even that is going to be an incredible body of material. Today I was at the library of the Inst. Etn. Ak. Nauk [Ethnographic Institute of the Academy of Sciences] to check through the books that have been selected for me: they are to be microfilmed. It took my breath away—two tables full of stuff. What I suspected has indeed proved to be the case. The literature on shamanism is not huge, but scattered; it is hard to assess not because of its immensity but because the brief 2- and 3-page reports are simply impossible to lay one's hands on. And now those 1,000 little scraps of information are sitting here, on my desk...

Confounded bad luck: the Siberian Studies people and curators in all the museums take off on summer holidays from 1 Aug., which means the collections will be closed to me. I have carried on copying the catalogues, of course, but I shall no longer be able to dig around amongst the artifacts themselves as I was up till now. Is that any cause for lament when I shall be taking back home with me a description of every shaman artifact that is in Leningrad (in all three museums). That will come to several thousand! I am assured that they are going to systematically photograph the things and send those on to me in Budapest. I console myself with the thought that this isn't a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and I'll come to Leningrad at other times. That is not just a pipe dream.

L. P. Potapov, director of the Academy's Ethnographic Institute, has stated that I ought to come here for a year, and as he is an academician, his word carries some weight. It means that I shall then be able to photograph everything.

I delivered my first lecture on Friday. Just imagine, reading a paper in Russian, as far as one can without stammering and taking care to put the stresses in the right places. Then understanding the questions (making out the Leningrad, Muscovite and those good old Siberian dialects) and being able instantly to formulate answers in my own head (to ensure that they are comprehensible, well considered and adequate) before uttering them out loud in elegant Russian. A nice test, wouldn't you say! Words can't describe how great a success I was. Today, with the aid of a female colleague, I was able to calmly look through a transcript (an officially stamped copy will eventually be sent to the Museum as well) and see that I went down well.

One more outcome that wasn't envisaged: I have tracked down, and already copied from the inventory registers, the shaman songs that are on phonograph cylinders. In the last few days they have made a start on playing them to record them on tape, which I shall also be taking home. Over 150 cylinders, from the Voguls to the Chukchi. Have you any idea what a gold mine this is!—To say nothing of what it would be worth if my plan works out. Once I have them on tape, I intend to take the whole lot to the Institute of Northern Peoples and get the students there to transcribe and translate the texts. If it comes off, then that in itself is a book's worth—no body of material of its like has yet been published in the field of shaman studies.—Barely 8–10 scattered shaman songs have been published hitherto, and even those without the tunes, of course.

I am also collecting manuscripts. I am searching high and low for a manuscript that is recorded in the Tungus language, but the collector [I. S. Suslov?] did not translate it. His wife was a Tunguz, so he had the opportunity to take down as many shaman songs as the shamans in his district knew. I would like to have all of them microfilmed.

I am also systematically going through the photograph archives. Here, too, I shall only be able to accomplish in full the plan that I hatched back at home, which is to copy the catalogue entries. Then I shall have a handle on the entire stock of photographic material—unfortunately, only a description. Since I have been in Leningrad I have already envisaged getting a copy made of every negative, but that can't be done right now for financial reasons...

4 August

You know I spend a lot of time mulling over opportunities in the field of Siberian research, the tasks that need to be tackled. I have now built up for myself a picture, however dim and patchy it may be, of the materials (artifacts, photographs, manuscripts, etc.) that are here and the researchers. Here too, though, the picture is deceptive. I now know for certain that the literature on shamanism

is not huge, merely scattered. And, sad to say, third- (if not fourth-) rate! To give just one example: amongst the roughly 1,200 bibliographical references that I have, only 2 articles are concerned with the 'Yenisei Ostyaks' = Kets, or, another example, Tunguz shaman beliefs are the most thoroughly researched: 21 articles on them. Can you guess how many pages that amounts to in total? 134. That, I think you'll agree, is no more than a slim book, even if you were to bang it out in one go. And I am speaking only about the quantity here; it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the quality is even more mediocre! Descriptions from missionaries, travellers and exiles to Siberia that were superficial even a long time ago. These days, no trained ethnographer is studying shamanism amongst either the Ket or the Tungus. So much, off the top of my head, for the "inconceivably vast" literature, as one Swedish shaman scholar (Ohlmarks) would have it.

What about the artifacts?—You are right: there is a huge body of material. But it's like our own Documentation Dept. Do you remember how I was moaning on about incantations before I came away? Then I set down to writing out (and having typed up) the entire material in Documentation, along with all the relevant collections in Ethn. II. I can tell you, there are no more than 5–10 specimens of any given type. When I am copying the inventory entries I get a sense of being crushed by the sheer quantity. That is literally how it is, since I must copy several hundred (if not thousand) entries. But when I get down to sorting them out, it turns out that any given people, or given group of artifacts, is represented pitifully, if at all. There is not one Ostyak or Vogul shaman costume, for instance. How, in that case, can any comparison be made? How can one prepare a page on shaman costumes for an 'atlas of Siberia'? Yet that is what they are doing; indeed, it has already been done. Then here we have e.g. the question of shaman songs. I'll stake my life that 10 songs with notated melodies have not been published from the whole of Siberia. So those amount to nothing. I have now completed work in the Phonographic Archive, so I know there are 190–200 of them. Impressive, huh? Whilst I was playing them onto the tape-recorder, from dawn to dusk, I had the feeling it would never end. No problem if they have not been published before, I thought to myself, here we have an unknown haul. That's all well and good, but I have now sorted through them, and do you know what? There are two Yakut shaman songs—in principle, that is. Because when I dug out the only Yakut-speaker in Leningrad it turned out that one of the 'Yakut' songs is something else (possibly Tungus, I shall have to ascertain that at some point in the future). Then there are 2 which are Vogul! And 3 Ostyak—again in principle, as in practice there might as well be none at all because the cylinders are so awful (they were collected by W. Steinitz) that no voice can be made out. —You may recall that there are 5 major Samoyed ethnic groups. Well, of those only two—the Nenets and Selkup—are represented here, by 3 and 2 cylinders. So much, then, for 'Uralic' (= Finno-Ugrian + Samoyedic) shaman songs. Try

comparing those! Of course, there is a lot from other peoples, but it is primarily the Finno-Ugrian and Samoyedic that are of interest to us...

Yet there is nothing (in reserve). Leningrad therefore drops out of the game. Moscow did not figure from the outset as there is no shaman specialist there. If I take stock of where any attention is given to shamanism, the picture is far from rosy, to be sure. There is no one in Helsinki; the Scandinavians look no further than the Lapps [Sami]; Berlin runs to no more than Steinitz, and he is more a linguist at that; in Paris, Eliade is at a far remove from the Siberian material; Switzerland comes into the reckoning with Schröder alone, but he works only with the Mongolians; Mongolia itself is still weak (Rinchen is on his own, and he is only collecting); Japan is a blank; the Turks have only that Bashkir (his name escapes me) and Köprülü Mehmed Fuad, with the former untrained whilst the latter has opted for politics; the Estonians, who have pitched in to Siberian studis substantially, are no more interested in shamanism now than they were before. I could carry on the list for minutes on end.

It may sound a boast if I say that that leaves Budapest, since there was at least a tradition of research into shamanism there (cf. the work of Aladár Bán, János Jankó, Bernát Munkácsi, Sándor Solymossy). But who is there now? The only person who is attempting to examine the ethnography of Siberia—and it is perhaps not a boast to say so—is me. So, it's down to me to represent Hungary... up till now I was under the apprehension that the cause of shamanism here, in the Soviet Union, was in strong (and, above all, many) hands, and I thought it would do if I were merely to examine the matter from a Hungarian viewpoint. Here, though, it has become clear that no one accepts responsibility for research into sh[amanism]. For my part, I sense (indeed, know) that the Hungarian issues will not be resolvable as long as certain aspects of Siberian shamanism remain shrouded in mystery.

The long and short of it is that, *faute de mieux,* it is up to me to take on the job.

22 August

The answer from Moscow, at long last. They have given permission for just three cities: Kazan, Irkutsk, Chita. In other words, I shall only be able to work amongst the Buryats.

I think it is a great shame about Khabarovsk.

1957, Siberia

3 September, Irkutsk—Bokhan—Khada-ayl

We set off this morning to be with the Buryats. The departure was in no way untroubled. It was raining, and everyone predicted we would get bogged down in the taiga. I was not to be deflected: if we did not get going today, the ground

would be even more impassable by tomorrow, and then we really would be bogged down.

Aleksei Dementevich Fat'yanov, director of the Irkutsk Museum, my secretary and myself went off to Sharakshinova Nadezhda Osipovna's apartment to pick her up too before making our start. Nadezhda Osipovna harped on about exactly the same thing: we should not set off because we would get stuck in the taiga. I remained unbending.

In the end everyone gave in.

The taiga is imposing and, in my view, at its most splendid in the autumn. The pines are still dark green, the foliage of the white birches has already turned red, whilst all the other trees have now taken on a yellow garb. If the wind gets up, broad swathes of leaves spiral around in the air, laying down a fresh carpet – all in accordance with the primordial order of successive ancestors.

15 September, Lake Baikal

I awoke to an overcast morning. My customary luck is deserting me, it seems, and I am only able to see Lake Baikal in the rain. Our vehicle speeds towards the sacred lake of the Buryats on a wonderful road. I see real taiga.

The taiga is at its loveliest, perhaps, at this time of the year, in autumn. The evergreen pines are still dark green, the leaves of the white birches still red, whereas the foliage of the other deciduous trees is now a golden yellow. And when a breeze ruffles, from time to time, a broad veil of leaves sets off towards the ground to cloak the black earth with a new layer, in accordance with Nature's age-old unwritten law.

The lake is captivating.

Nature took pity on me; it stopped raining and the sun even peeped through every now and then. As a result, I tried my hand at a bit of photography, taking a whole roll as booty.

On the Baikal shore I ate some of the lake's omul fish—really excellent it was—and, in the teeth of counsel and warnings from the pre-Soviet Siberyak settlers, took a dip in the Baikal's waters.

16 September, Irkutsk

Went to the museum early in the morning. Nadya was already hard at work, transcribing the final few metres of Buryat material from the tape-recordings. It has only become clear now just how much material we have collected.

With the transcription of the material done, we made a start on preparing to catalogue the photographs. I prepared approx. 250 photos. Now that I have had a chance to assess the lot, it has become clear that it will give a conspectus of all areas of ethnography. I can declare in good conscience that the material would already amount to a small book.

We finished cataloguing the photographs by the evening; we were invited to spend the evening at Nadya's place.

I returned to the hotel after midnight and put in a call to Gerasimova (she too has a bit of Buryat in her).

23 September, Kizlans

In the morning we set off to see the shaman Yegor Mikhailovich Kizlashov in Kizlans. En route I found a rock face with petroglyphs amongst the kurgans. There was a shaman drum on it. A Tagarian grave of the Scythian era, but the glyph was older, from the Karasuk (1st-2nd millennia BC) or even Afanasevskaya (3rd-4th millennia BC) culture.

On the way, I took some photographs of Sagay men's and women's costumes in Sofronov *ulus* (the Molotov Collective Farm). Plenty of timber yurts as well, which were covered with tree bark. I also found a hut dug into the ground.

At Kizlans we went straight to the shaman. He was lying in bed, feeling unwell. I asked him to talk about shamanism for the tape-recorder. He acquiesced only after prolonged entreaties.

We immediately went to look for an electricity supply and found one, too, at one of the collectives.

Back then to the shaman to load the aged, 77-year-old Yegor into the car and set off for the collective.

We started off by considering all aspects, one by one, of how someone becomes a shaman, then the equipment that shamans use. We brought it round to the drum, and I then asked him to sing the consecration chants. He was reluctant to launch into them, but he bit the bullet in the end. Admittedly, it was the first time in my life that I heard a real live shaman chant or, to be more precise, the first time I had seen a shaman summoning the spirits, but I reckon a chill will still run down my spine if I hear and see it a hundred times over. Yegor went into a trance within seconds. He did not hold a drum, but he still beat an invisible drum with his right hand, now whistling, now whinnying as he spoke a text in Sagay. Utterly unforgettable.

1958, Leningrad

9 January, 1958

Great news! I shall record in chronological order the twist that events have taken.

Two days ago, I got a telephone message from the Institute's director's office that I should go up to see them. What the hell could be up?—What was up was that I met an old acquaintance, Rinchen. You will recall him: the tall, bearded Mongolian who obtained his doctorate in linguistics at Budapest, he had brought me a Mongolian shaman's costume.

That evening I dropped in on Rinchen. We put together plans for an expedition in 1959. I shall be going for only three months, over June-July-Aug. We shall

collect in three places (without going into details: the typical Mongol shamanism of Mongolia can be captured in one place, a Buryat flavour in the second, whilst in the third place I shall be able to observe the influence of one of the Mongolian ethnic groups that live in China). Rinchen will accompany me throughout, which means we shall be able to meet as many shamans as live in that area, and they will tell all, because Rinchen is well known amongst them. As to how realistic the plan is, Rinchen has been of such sterling service to the Mongolian state that they will unquestionably grant his request. There is another important angle too: they are in the process of writing a history of Mongolia right now (it will be in 3 volumes). Part of it has to be written by Rinchen, and he, for his part, has declared that this cannot be done without a knowledge of the superstructure (shamanism). On that basis, people were absolutely envisaging his undertaking field work of this sort next year, which is when he announced that he could not undertake the work on his own but would need to call on the assistance of the top expert on shamanism [he said that: I am only reporting his words], who moreover had done work amongst the Buryat Mongols in both 1957 and 1958, and who was also admirably versed in the shamanism of the Tunguso-Manchu peoples (given that the Mongols had links of this kind with the Tungus). They are definitely going to invite me to that end (given that they are absolutely keen to have the history of Mongolia written). So, it's all go for 1959. Our plans went further than that, however. There are a total of 1 million Mongols in Mongolia, but 3 million in China! In other words, one needs to hunt out shamanism there as well. There are three major ethnic groups who still hold shamanistic beliefs: the Daghurs, the Chakhars and the Barguts. So, looking to 1960: the Mongol peoples of China. My plan is that if I can get into China, then after the Mongols I may as well collect the Golds and Manchu too. I am therefore intending to work for six months in China in 1960. Of course, I would not only be collecting. I envisage it working as follows: I shall get back home in Sep. 1958 and make a start on the Buryat Mongol book. I want to have that done by May 1959, which is when I would set off for Mongolia, but flying via the Soviet Union to pop into Leningrad. There I would spend a week finishing off the book (there are obviously going to be gaps in the descriptions of Buryat museum artifacts, given that I am right now only at the stage of copying the inventory entries and do not have the time to produce an up-to-date description of all the artifacts). Then on from Lgr. to Irkutsk, where I shall supplement the monograph amongst the Buryats themselves. Obviously, a host of deficiencies are going to come to light once the monograph is completed, so a whole month will be absolutely necessary to make those good. In June-July-Aug. I shall work in Mongolia, then in early Sept. 1959 fly back home and set to work on a book on the Mongols of Mongolia. With that finished in May 1960, I shall set off for China, but anticipating that I shall spend 1 month in Mongolia tying up any extras there. Then in China... I won't go on.

14 January

The matter of the Tuvan expedition was resolved three minutes ago—and only in principle, of course! As to what that means, well, as you know... I have shied away from Tuva. All I ever read in the literature was that they are Lamaists, and I supposed that this Buddhist sect swept the original shamanistic beliefs away without trace. Today, it sprang to mind that Ye. D. Prokofyeva, the student of Samoyed shamanism, worked in Tuva for several years. I popped over to clarify things with her. (I am tied to Tuva, you see, because the Institute's expedition this year will be going there, so either I tag along with that or I must also give up any idea of working in the MAE [Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography—Kunstkamera] expedition.) Anyway, she knows. (I already discussed with the team leader at the end of last year that if I were of a mind to join them, he could see no obstacle to that and, indeed, would welcome it.) Now then, it became clear today that Lamaism was about as much use to the good old Tuvinians as, for instance, holy water was to the Buryats. (I myself can relate from personal experience that Buryats who were baptised at the end of the last century took not the blindest bit of notice of this 'noble' deed on the part of the Orthodox mission: shamans continued to flourish just as they did amongst Mongolians who were not exposed at all to molestation by Christianity.)

The Tuvinians, then, were officially Buddhists (or, to be more precise, Lamaists), but in reality shamanism persisted—to the extent that Ye. D. Prokofyeva was able to witness an entire shaman ceremony, performed in full shaman costume, even as late as 1955 (that was when she was amongst them).

On Thursday I shall sit down with her so we can designate collecting sites on a map. That will mean I can make a beeline for the villages where shamans live. We shall compile a list of names of Tuvinian shamans and pick out some people (good Tuvinians) who have been infected with a bit of scholarship (i.e. have an interest in shamanism) so that, by looking them up and getting them to accompany me (as guides, interpreters and facilitators, i.e. persuading the shamans to display their expertise), I can do my work and amass data on shamanism. I have already learned at least that the full shaman kit (drum, cloak, cap, stick, etc.) still survives in East Tuva. [...]

That, then, is how the 1958 expeditions to Siberia now stand.

If things work out, during what are officially 'two months' (that is the period for which the Hungarian Academy and the Ministry of Culture have sent me out) I shall have led 5 field trips to Siberia (last year it was the Buryats and the Khokass, this year the Tuvinians, the Buryats and the Yakuts) and I shall have completed inventories of the shaman material held by scientific institutions in seven cities (last year Moscow, Leningrad, Irkutsk and Abokan, this year Kyzyl, Yakutsk and Krasnoyarsk, as I would also like to spend one week in Krasnoyarsk).

That, then, is the way I plan things here, in Leningrad. Meanwhile I am piling up material and deciphering it. I have run to earth a Buryat lassie who was a

female shaman back home when she was a young girl. I am collecting some splendid Buryat shaman chants from her (I am tape-recording them)—here, in Leningrad. Another Buryat is translating into Russian the many dozens of Buryat shaman chants that are in the Khangalov MS.

For my accommodation, I am making tape-recordings with the Uzbeks of their recollections of the clandestine shamanism maintained within the Muslims. I am also sweating blood to decipher the 200 shaman chants that are preserved here on wax cylinders. That is perhaps the toughest nut of all.

I am slowly coming to the end of the most exciting of all occupations in the world—the copying of the inventory catalogue—after which will come the photography. And so the time passes here in Leningrad.

31 January

I have received the invitation to go to Yakutia, and what is more they will pay the expenses for the Irkutsk-Yakutsk and the Yakutsk-Irkutsk legs. True, it's not by plane but boat, but it will be a wonderful trip. I shall sail the entire length of Lake Baikal northwards, where we turn into the upper reaches of the Angara to swim up that to the sources. I shall then cross the watershed by dry land to the River Lena, then take a boat on the Lena to Yakutsk. A week's sailing on the virgin forest-fringed lakes and rivers of North-eastern Siberia. Aren't you jealous? But I shall have no time for leisure-cruising, so for the return trip I shall be doling out a big slice from my own pocket to add to the money for the boat ticket so that I can fly back to Irkutsk. How shall I make that good? Either my wristwatch or the leather jacket...

It is possible that the trip to Tuva will also be firmed up by next week. And now, given that shortage of time means I shall have difficulty fitting in that expedition, let me tell you what I have come a cropper on! A Vogul collecting trip.—Of course, if it comes off, I shall squeeze in the time for that too.

It seems unlikely, I consider, that the expeditions will be without fruit. The Monroe doctrine applies with spades to Siberian studies: Siberia for the Siberians! For that reason, I shall be working with an Altai Turk in Tuva, at the foot of the Altai Mountains, a Buryat woman amongst the Buryats, a Yakut man (or possibly woman) amongst the Yakuts, and there will be a Vogul woman with me amongst the Voguls. And I now know exactly which Tuvinian, Buryat, Yakut and Vogul shamans I need to look up!

1958, Siberia

9 July, Alygdzher

My work is going well. I have tape-recorded shaman chants and we have already put those down on paper and the translations are ready; I have photographed work processes, taking around 80 shots of a shaman headdress-in-the-making and around 40 of a shaman's drum beater being produced from reindeer antler.

I have made a detailed description of the shaman costume, producing drawings of the cloak, the neckerchief and the boots. I have sketched each little pendant, ribbon, etc., making notes of the Karaghas names, the material, colour, its significance. I have also made a thorough study of the shaman drum. Some touching subtleties have emerged. I now have, for instance, the 9 kinds of wood of which it is made. A genuine 'magic steed', since it too is a saddle beast! Which is why it is made e.g. from the hide of a middle-aged roe-deer, because a young animal tires quickly, whereas an old one doesn't go fast enough. Then too, there are two cross-sticks in the drum, which have the same names as are given to the breast and loin straps on a reindeer; in other words, the drum is 'saddled'. Nothing better demonstrates how very much it is an animal than the fact that it has 'ears' and 'blood', for example.

The Karaghas comprise 5 clans. The costume of the shamans of each clan differ from one another in minute details. Each differently coloured little ribbon or each animal hide indicates the clan to which the wearer belongs.

The Karaghas have taken a shine to me, and I to them. I am staying with the younger sister of a shaman, and it was a good choice.

But there are many, many fine things besides shamanism that one comes across. A little bag for keeping odds and ends in: made by skinning the hide of a roe kid in one piece and sewing up the natural apertures (neck, limbs), and there you have your bag. Wood, bark and antler—those are the raw materials from which pots and various implements are made. As for buildings, there are tepees of birch bark. The fire burns in a small pit in the middle. And just to set your mouth watering, whilst I sit on a bear skin my slant-eyed hostess scrapes the ash from the embers, places little 'dumplings' on them, rakes the ashes back over them, and by the time I have put to her the question of how many souls a person has, she is grubbing up piping-hot 'ash-baked' scones. Recipe: tea, salt, flour, and maybe reindeer milk. You wouldn't believe what it is like to lie down in a tepee. You can gaze at the figures traced by the smoke pouring out through the smoke vent, breathe in lungfuls of the redolence of burning pine- and birch-wood. The silhouette of each birch-bark vessel shows up on the 'wall'. Outside, the clatter of reindeers galloping by... (their hooves really do clatter). And if the 'master of the fire' should appear amongst the flames, my hostess would sprinkle a little milk for him, so he should not starve, poor thing.

Is there any life more splendid than that of an ethnographer?

In the morning, I shall be hitting the road again. I have a driver and reindeer; by the evening I shall be looking into the deeds of the shamans at Nyerkha. By the time you read these lines, my tape-recorder will be capturing the chants of Buryat shamans... My hostess has not yet finished the milking; I am waiting for her, because she is going to do a bit of shaman ritual for the tape-recorder...

The country in which this 'village' is situated is gorgeous. All around are the peaks of the Sayan Mountains, with the streams of the River Uda punching in

through small ravines to race down through the valley. Rock-falls, caves and an immense cleft up on high. The shamans would ride their drums over that when they had business to attend to in the other world. Dogs—*laikas*—in great numbers all over the place; they are the most intelligent hunting dogs. Canoes hewn from single tree trunks are beached on the riverbank. Every now and then a screech from an alarmed bird breaks the silence.

28 July, the banks of the River Oka

This morning we carried on towards Bratsk. The goal: after Shamankovo, looking for petroglyphs on the banks of the River Oka a few kilometres from the village of Bolshaya Kada.

We reached the site in question late p.m.

The Oka races wildly in its rocky channel, bordered on its left bank by a vertical rock wall (basalt). An ideal place for prehistoric man to bring a hunt to a conclusion; by driving forest animals towards the riverbank, they were forced against the rock-wall perimeter. In a fit of despair, the fleeing animals would have flung themselves into the foaming water, which of course did not bring salvation, only another kind of death. At the bend in the river, where the water quietens down, it would have been easy for them to haul the battered animals out of the water. It is quite impossible to swim in the Oka here; the bed is full of rocks and boulders, and the hurtling river smashes everything up on those.

Prehistoric man also sought to ensure the success of a hunt by magical means: he inscribed and painted various drawings on the rock-wall.

By the light of the setting sun, we were still able to make out relics of the art of Neolithic and Bronze-Age man.

I was firmly convinced that I would also find relics of shamanism here.—In places (where there was not so much as a foothold on dry land at the base of the wall) I waded determinedly through the water in search of what I was so fervently expecting.

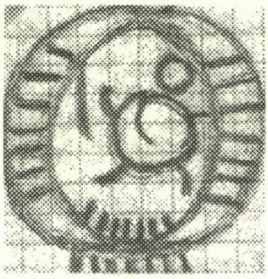
All at once, a rush of warmth: after the many glyphs of deer, swans, etc., my eye alighted on a disc. Merely a sun disc? A squint at it from left and right: it's not a sun disc, that's for sure. Maybe a shaman drum. I now trace round the contours with chalk; the water is swirling under me, but I don't think for one moment about the fate of the unfortunate animals caught up in the hunt because the oldest hitherto known relic of shamanism unfolds before my very eyes. There is no doubt that this is a drawing of a shaman's drum; it greatly resembles a drawing of a double drum.

The failing light hinders scrutiny of the drawing's every detail. Well, there's always tomorrow.

Tuesday, 29 July, the Oka valley, Bratsk

The rays of the rising sun found me already perched on a wooden pole that was jammed into a crack below the drawing. Using a candle, I cast light or shade on

the drawing from various angles so that every detail should be precisely distinguishable. The lines are slightly carved into the rock and coloured with a reddish-brown pigment—just like the pigment on painted drums of the modern Altai and Khokass peoples. Having marked out the outlines with chalk, I laid a piece of tracing paper over the glyph and copied the lines with a pencil. The glyph, in Okladnikov's opinion, is Bronze Age, so the drum is a Bronze-Age shaman's drum.



It looked like this: the drum was decorated with three sets of seven lines ('the journey of the spirits'), a representation of the sun and one of the moon, and a longer line ('the spirit journey').

We finished copying all the petroglyphs by midday...

30 July, Irkutsk

The Karaghas [Tofalar] collection was completed. The end result: marvellous. At the Institute of Ethnography in Moscow, they made out that the Karaghas are now Russified and there's no longer anything to look for there. I didn't believe them—and I was right.

The outcome of the collecting will be a paper with a title on the lines of 'Differences of clan, class and rank amongst Karaghas shamans.'.

In the course of the collecting work we managed to sketch 14 complete shaman outfits: head-dress, cloak, boots, drum, drum beater. The great variety was already evident after the first five drawings. I was bursting with curiosity: what might be the reason for that? It soon became clear that these are clan distinctions. The Karaghas have five clans: the Chogdi, Kara Yoldu, Sharing Khash, Khash, Cheptei. The shamans are clan shamans, with each clan having its own distinctive outfit. One head-dress is ornamented by a human face, a second by circles, whilst a third has no decoration at all.

I then treated each of the five clans as separate entities, running through all the aspects with each clan. Sharp boundaries cropped up in everything. Each one prepares the hide for the shaman's costume differently, each producing it from a different kind of hide. (The same hide is used by two of the clans, but the manner in which it is cured differs, so the hides acquire different colours.) With one group/clan the drum has 9 resonators, with another—21; one group bends the frame of the drum around a block split in two planes, a second around a single block, the third around a post driven into the ground, the fourth likewise, but they progressively drive the posts into the ground as the frame bends round more and more into a circle, and so on. There are clan differences even down to such details as how the shaman holds the beater in his hand. There is a thong at the end of the beater, you see. Now, in one clan the shaman hooks that round his wrist, in the second to the thumb, in the third to the index finger, in the

fourth to the middle finger, and in the fifth to the ring finger. Naturally, there are also differences in the melodies of the shaman songs of the five clans.—I won't carry on the listing here; you will in any case get to read the article at the MS stage. Of course, I was intrigued by what might be the reason for the clan differences. Once I had mapped out where they reside it immediately became clear that there is a ternary structuring: there is a central group (rather cut off from other peoples); there is a northern group, which is situated close to the Buryats, with some families living alongside Buryats; and there is a southern group, which had strong links with the Soyots.

I now threw myself back into collecting, this time enquiring about Buryat and Soyot idiosyncrasies. (As you know, I am already a dab hand at that; just think how many times I have raised questions back home about things that I had only encountered amongst the Siberian peoples.) The findings were amazing: there was one group in which Buryat idiosyncrasies were present, and there was another where there was no knowledge of those at all, but the characteristic features of Soyot shamanism were present. The reasons for the clan peculiarities became apparent: divergent interethnic associations. Those associations went as far as the shamans of the Kara Yoldu—'Black Weasel' clan, for instance, having Buryat spirits as well, using a Buryat word to name the drum, and (when they were invoking Buryat spirits) singing their chants in the Buryat tongue.

The matter is not quite as simple as that, of course. The different clans all practice exogamy and have a duolineal [i.e. both patrilineal and matrilineal—Ed.'s note] descent system. This is where individual nuances came in. Female shamans would start their activities as girls and would then marry a man from another clan. As a wife, she would now belong to the other clan, the nature of her dress etc. would consequently also change, etc. etc. Light was thrown on a host of nice subtleties. I have constructed the internal lay-out of the bark tepees (men's and women's sides), 'mapping' into that the place where the shamanistic objects are kept; I have collected notes on their mode of transport, etc. I have recorded and 'mapped' which parts of the sacrificial reindeer are 'donated' to the drum, the order in which they are placed under the drum, etc. etc.

The other major distinction is class. The shaman spirits are either 'white' or black', the former being benevolent, the latter evil. A shaman accordingly becomes either a 'white shaman' or a 'black shaman'.

There are also differences of rank: the spirit that selects a shaman can be 'little', 'medium' or 'big', and the shaman selected accordingly a 'little shaman', 'medium shaman' or 'big shaman'. One shaman—he was a little shaman when he operated—related that he flew very low when he was on his journeys; big shamans flew or journeyed at high altitude, almost amidst the clouds. On what? On the drum, of course.—I recorded the names given to every part of every object. That terminology yielded lots of new data. For instance, a shaman's

drum is a harnessed 'saddle reindeer', and it has not only 'ears' and 'sinews' but also a 'loin strap' and a 'breast collar' to hold the saddle.

I won't list any more; you will see later on in the article.

I now intend to shed more light on the Soyot connection. The day after tomorrow, I shall be setting off to go amongst the Soyots, which will give me a chance to get answers to all those questions of minute detail that have not previously been recorded and so could not be included in comparative studies.

Once again I shall be treading 'sleigh-bell whirlpools' with the life of reindeer-herding hunters before me.

In between the Karaghas collecting trip that has gone and the Soyot one to come, I have been doing a bit of archaeology. This morning I flew back to Irkutsk. So far I have been bumped along approx. 1,000 km in a truck with Okladnikov (he is one of the top Siberian archeologists). We have been inspecting archeological excavations in the River Angara area. Palaeolithic and neolithic settlements and a 7th- to 8th-century 'Turkic' (Kurykan) earthwork (the Siberian equivalent of the Avar *ring*)—those are this season's haul. And one more thing: petroglyphs are to be found—so the rumours went—on the banks of the Oka, one of the Angara's northern tributaries. We searched for them. The Oka is a typical mountain stream, a downward raging torrent, the site in question being between two 15-metre-high vertical rock faces. A fitting site for prehistoric man to conclude his hunts. The hunters trapped their prey (roe, red deer, etc.) against the precipitous bank, and the harried game threw itself into the mountain stream as a last resort. Lower down, at the bend in the river where the water becomes calmer, it was easy to haul in the battered corpses from the river.

Efforts were also made to ensure the success of the hunt by magic expedients. That is why all kinds of representations were incised into and painted on the rocks. I reckoned on there being relics of primitive shamanism amongst those glyphs, and I was not let down.

I found one such amongst the Bronze-Age petroglyphs: the drum of a Bronze-Age Oka-bank shaman. It resembles the drums of the Yenisei Ostyaks, which have preserved many archaic features: a triple set of double lines between two circles denotes the path of the spirits who congregate in response to the shaman's invocation. On the upper side of the drum is a full moon, beneath it the sun, with 4 rays. The 4 days given over to 'archeologising' were worth it, wouldn't you say? I towed a tree trunk of appropriate girth along the river to below the glyph, then worked my way up to it via fissures in the basalt in order to wedge the trunk into a crack there, perch on that, and set to sketching: I pressed the tracing paper to the glyph with one hand whilst doing a rubbing of its outlines with the other. The wild mountain stream was thundering down below me. Its waters were all but boiling, the spume splash-

ing up as high as 1 metre, because the billows shatter on the rocks lurking on the river bed and the basalt boulders that have dropped into it. Certainly no escape for desperately fleeing animals here: the leap into the water meant sure death, because swimming is hopeless, the rushing water would dash anyone who attempts to swim against the rocks. Even the death rattle of the poor animal would be inaudible, the frothing, thundering torrent carrying even that off...

20 August, Medvedevka

In the morning, I went to the Council Office and made a note of the few old Soyot names then took off to try my luck. I went first of all to the younger sister of the shaman I was looking for, 73-year-old Syzykpen. Two shamans used to operate here: the female shaman Saljak Khrorlu, who died in 1952, and Syzykpen, who is still alive. I made a drawing of the deceased female shaman's costume first of all. The shaman outfit of the Soyots of Ka-khem differs sharply from the Todzhan costume that's for sure. Whilst I was in the middle of my collecting work a middle-aged man dropped by; he was obviously familiar with Soyot shamanism. When I had completed the drawing of the costume, I turned to interrogating the guest, who was seated on the floor, slurping salty tea from a Chinese-style bowl. It soon became clear that he also knew some shamanic chants: when on his own in the forest, he often practiced singing the chants he had heard during shamanic rituals. He soon proved as good as his word by singing them for the tape-recorder; he quickly showed what he knew.

Next came the critical moment, when I asked him to talk shaman Syzykpen into demonstrating a shamanic ritual. After 20 minutes of (for me, nail-biting) waiting, the old man made an appearance. The Soyots had seemingly already got wind of the favourable decision, because the yurt was full of people by the time the shaman arrived. A few men and many women were already seated in a circle. The shaman took his place on the ground. He had to be entreated a wee bit more but then set to it—sooner than I had expected. He had already started by the time I had dictated into the microphone who was going to sing.—On the second go, though, he managed to get going properly. He had barely got through the first few lines when his eyes closed and he was rocking his head from side to side as he chanted. It made a big impact on his audience. The women had begun breast-feeding their infants so they would not kick up a racket, but they now forgot about their children, and the children themselves about crying, instead letting the life-sustaining teat drop from their mouths, so attentively did they give ear to what was going on. The womenfolk listened raptly to the shaman, oblivious to the fact that their dresses were still open. The ecstasy rose to an ever-higher pitch. By now I had abandoned any hope of being able to follow the shaman's flailing head with my microphone, and in despair I toyed with the idea of notating the chant and getting by that way. The shaman was thrashing his head around without a moment's pause, at one time whispering very softly, at another singing

in a loud roar, whooping, sucking the air into his lungs then covering his mouth with his hand, so that the words were distorted into a mumble. When the dramatic tension had reached fever-pitch, one of the women took up her infant from her lap and laid it on the ground then crawled over to the shaman, picked up a pipe that had fallen from his belt, filled it with tobacco and lighted it. At the right moments, she would blow a lungful of smoke onto the shaman—more and more each time. Then, all of a sudden, the chanting broke off, the shaman placed his palm before his mouth and started swallowing the smoke with loud gulps. He had now turned completely away from me; so, standing behind him, I held the microphone over his head to try and keep it in front of his mouth. My brow was meanwhile beading with sweat: the tape was coming to an end and valuable lines of the chant might be lost whilst I turned it over. I had devilish good luck. Just as the tape was unwinding from the reel, the shaman finished his invocation of the spirits and the woman again blew smoke from the pipe on the shaman's mouth. I then signalled with my eyes for her to keep it up, keep on going, because the shaman struck up his chanting again. Perhaps nothing was missed. The first words the shaman spoke after the ritual, the first indications of recovering consciousness, fitted onto the very last bit of the reverse side of the new tape.

The ritual had come to an end. The shaman Syzykpen exerted just as magnetic an effect on those around him as the Sagay Kizlan had done last year in Western Sayan, though it did not have such a powerful impact on me as that did. It seems one can become habituated even to shamanic ecstasy.

Late in the afternoon we made a start on committing the recorded chants to paper. We are having to replay lines 10, 20 and sometimes as many as maybe 100 times before Syzykpen's words become intelligible. We shall not record any new ones until the first has been transcribed. After that has been written down, we shall make an attempt, with his help, to understand the lines that could not be transcribed, and similarly it is only him we can ask about words which are unintelligible or of obscure meaning, which is why it is necessary for us to commit the text to paper whilst we are still here.

As it is, the note on which I parted from the old shaman was that tomorrow he will sing some more for the tape-recorder. It may be, however, that we shall meet before the end of the day, as we are not getting on too well with the text; it's very hard to understand. Now we have replayed each line to the old fellow so he has a better chance of understanding his own words. And something I have experienced a good few times before has again proved to be the case, which is that the shaman himself is unable to understand it much better. He doesn't understand because he doesn't know his own texts. A splendid piece of evidence to prove that shamans improvise, albeit from fixed elements, of course. We carried on the transcription work on the turf in front of the yurt as long as there was light for us to see by. I agreed with Syzykpen that we would call by his place first thing in the morning, at daybreak, to carry on with the work of transcription. ❧

Another Dimension

András Schiff in Conversation with Eszter Rádai

Eszter Rádai: *You said to me a minute ago that you are less keen to talk about music than about other subjects such as politics and public life. Why?*

András Schiff: I am happy to talk about music too; it's just that it is the very essence of music that it speaks about things that cannot be expressed in words. I don't know why, but we are still in the habit of trying to do so. It rarely comes off. It came off for Thomas Mann, for example, the way he talks about music in *Doctor Faustus*—it is worthwhile when done that way, of course.

May I ask for your views on musical life in Hungary? You have lived abroad for such a long time, does the grass look a bit greener from there than to someone living on the inside?

Even from the outside it is not all that green. But the meadow was never truly green anyway: this was always a sorry place, and there is nothing odd about that because musical life also reflects the conditions that prevail in society and the economy. We are inclined to shrug it off, saying that it is because Hungary is a small country. Yet there is a long list of European countries that are smaller than Hungary, so we should not be too proud of that smallness; it is not profitable, let alone productive, to use that as an excuse for all our faults. What characterises all areas of the arts in Hungary today, as I see it, is the intensity of acrimony: there are tremendously talented people in all fields, yet in some way they are not tolerant, they don't sit easily next to one another. There is a vast amount of intrigue, envy and malice. People take no delight in the successes of others. Just look at the furore that was kicked up in Hungary over the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Imre Kertész.

Eszter Rádai
is on the staff of the weekly Élet és Irodalom. *She has published several volumes of interviews.*

Did that surprise you? Did you really think that everyone, without exception, would jump for joy?

Yes, I have to admit I was surprised. I had my illusions, it may well be that I am naïve. But when I heard—because I count myself fortunate to be on close terms with Imre Kertész, who invited me and my wife to attend the prize-giving ceremony in Stockholm—that the secretariat of the Nobel Prize Committee, most unusually in the history of the Prize, had been inundated by letters and e-mail messages of protest from the laureate's fellow-countrymen, I was both amazed and saddened.

I understand that exactly the same thing happened with the award of the Nobel Prize for Chemistry to Albert Szent-Györgyi in 1937.

From which country did the protests come?

From Hungary.

Likewise? Then it seems to be a Hungarian speciality. I have observed similar instances in Austria, where I lived for many years. I suppose it must be a "Habsburg thing", something very *K. und K.*, with the difference that in Austria people are that bit more honey-tongued, so it is not quite so conspicuous.

You mean that we are less hypocritical? That Austrians who think like that have a sense of shame, whereas their counterparts in Hungary don't feel any shame?

Not exactly. It is not general, of course, but let us not pretend that this sort of thing does not exist. It always did, and I have always found it very disturbing. It was one of the reasons why I left Hungary in 1979, because it always put me dreadfully out of sorts.

In your case it was more than just a matter of a general and unaccountable feeling out of sorts. Three extraordinarily gifted, highly promising young pianists all reached maturity at that time, and the country really seemed to be too small for the three of you.

That's true, and there is no point in glossing over that. Even though I said earlier that Hungary is not such a small country, it is small in the sense that there are people who, like cockerels in a barnyard, think "I'm the king of the midden and no one else is going to scratch for food around here." Yet there is no good reason for anyone in this part of the world to be so petty. What a collection of brilliant writers there is here right now: Kertész, Nádas, Esterházy and others too, all of them on the best of terms, with the success of each and any one strengthening that of the others, which has an effect that benefits Hungarian literature as a whole. That is how it should happen in music as well, but I'm sorry to say that I have never come across it in music. The great composer György Ligeti, for exam-

ple, left the country, whilst György Kurtág—to my mind the greatest of all living composers—does not live in Hungary any more. And if one were to ask other Hungarian composers whether they take any pleasure in Kurtág's international success, I know for sure the responses would produce a truly deplorable picture.

I just cannot imagine that Bartók's compositional mastery, for example, would have been disputed by other Hungarian composers at the time. Of course, he then counted as an avant-garde composer, and the wider public of those days, beyond a very narrow coterie within the profession and in the arts, cannot be said to have been great Bartók fans. Yet for the latter he shone like a beacon without in any way detracting from the merits of Kodály or Dohnányi. I don't think musical life then was as cliquish as it is now, it was after the war that it became such. It's very odd. Now that I am talking about it, of course, I have my apprehensions about this being blown up into a "Jewish versus non-Jewish" thing.

Do you think that still plays a role?

I don't know. In the case of Kurtág, Kertész and myself, I believe it does. It is not possible to dodge the issue of anti-Semitism.

And did that have a part in your decision to move abroad?

Yes, but—how can I put this—it is a very complex matter. One of the reasons why I admire Imre Kertész and his works so much is that I identify completely with his thinking. The fatelessness that he writes about is also mine. I did not have to live through Auschwitz, thank God, though I did so at second hand. My mother and her family were deported, though not to Auschwitz, because by some miracle that particular railway line had been taken out by bombing, so they ended up in Austria... They returned, and they tried to bury the whole experience within themselves, to assimilate. All the same...

Were you, too, brought up in that spirit?

Totally.

Were you not even aware that you were Jewish?

Not that, because there was an occasion when the kids next door told me that they could not play football with me any more because I was Jewish. That is when I heard the word for the first time. It may have been in 1958 or '59. I went home in tears, but not before asking the kids what it meant, and why they were calling me that. They replied, "Because you're a Jew, and you Jews killed Jesus!" That was their explanation.

That happened in Budapest?

Yes, in Buda's verdant Twelfth District. I went home, and my parents explained what it meant to be a Jew, and that I was one. They were unable to offer much in the way of comfort, however, because the whole thing was quite incomprehensi-

ble to me, since I had no role in it: I had not been the cause of it, yet in some way I had. I did not have the slightest notion about my roots, but from then onwards I was aware that an insurmountable barrier divided me from others, from the other side, yet I still did not know why that side was different. That, in a word, is the state of fatelessness, and for me it will be a problem to the end of my days, because I have to get to the bottom of what it actually is...

Is that why you don't really feel at home here?

I am sorry to say it, but it's true. I cannot do anything about it, though I bear no resentment. This is not my home, though I can forgive but not forget. That is why in connection with the Holocaust—and this is most important—one should forgive, but one should not imagine (as the words of the national anthem have it) that "bygone sins are all atoned". They have not been atoned at all. Not so long ago I heard that Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy promised Imre Kertész that at last "we are going to take a square look at this": that has yet to happen, even so many decades after the event. Dreadful things happened here, and still, whoever one speaks to about those times, everyone trots out a story about his or her dad or grandad hiding this person or rescuing that one. Well, if everyone was saving Jews, who on earth committed those horrific things that my grandmother told me about? Mother did not tell me anything, because she believed so strongly in assimilation, and still does to this day, even though there is no reason to believe in it. My own family then lived in Debrecen, and the deportations started earlier there. The entire family was loaded up onto a horse-drawn cart and delivered to the ghetto. All the Debrecen neighbours came out to gather in front of the house and jeer, making gestures that "throats were going to be slit", and they had already started running into the house to carry off stuff, candelabra and anything else. So, that also happened. That also needs to be talked about. I don't know how it is possible to calm those feelings. In London I had a dear old friend, Uncle Lajos, and he said to me that "the country that did not kill me solely because I did not give it the chance to do so is not my home." There is no answer to that; but equally I could not say that we have no wish to assimilate, though it may be better if I only say that in my own name. When it comes down to it, Hungarian is my native language, and I adore the language and its literature, especially its poetry, and then again one thinks and dreams in Hungarian, whilst telling jokes is only truly fun in Hungarian. It is a strange business, then.

Do you suppose that this pettiness, this professional jealousy, is peculiar to Hungarians?

Not at all, it's just that other countries arrange things better.

Because this is a small country? Or is it rather that poverty makes the jealousy more conspicuous?

Is money all that important?

Possibly not, but an orchestra costs money.

Yes, indeed. It upsets me too when I hear that members of the Budapest Festival Orchestra are contracting themselves to Kuala Lumpur because their work is properly paid there. But for whom do they make music in Kuala Lumpur?

Since you have mentioned the Festival Orchestra, I am sure you are well aware that when you decided not to perform in Austria after the Freedom Party, led by Jörg Haider, joined the government coalition, and you demonstrated that by promptly cancelling a concert you were to give at the Austrian Embassy in Washington, D.C., Iván Fischer made a different decision and gave a highly successful concert with the Festival Orchestra at Vienna's Konzerthaus. "The musicians were faced with a major dilemma,", Fischer divulged a year later. "Was it permissible, was it proper or not... to give a concert there?... It then occurred to me that we should put on a concert that was about us making music together with Gypsies... Because artists ought to exist outside the mundane affairs of the world; they must live within their art... It is rarely permissible for them to speak out on social issues. On the other hand, there are certain situations and moments when they have to speak out." In the same interview Fischer, with reference to Bartók, recounted that during the 1930s, when anti-Semitism was rampant in Hungary, when anti-Jewish legislation was being placed on the statute book, when Jews were forbidden to marry Christians, Bartók wrote that mixing with other languages and other nations was very salutary in the case of folk song, enriching rather than impoverishing the Hungarian folk song repertory. "That's a wonderful example," Fischer said, "because it was a tangible contribution to the so-called race question whilst at the same time remaining within the bounds of art. He did not address the matter as a politician but in a grander, far more elevated manner." When you decided not to appear in Austria, you wished to make a more powerful, explicitly political gesture. Did you feel it was important not to stay "within the bounds of art"?

I don't think I did anything more than that. At the time, it was the tool that happened to be at hand, but it's not that I think other tools are any the less useful: that an article about folk songs was not a political action. It was a very signal and fine example of the stance to which Bartók subsequently also gave political testimony by emigrating to America. What a sacrifice that was! What character! Beethoven too was being political when he scratched out his original inscription to the *Eroica.* At the time of composition he had dedicated it to Napoleon, but later he realised that the man he had adulated was just a common or garden dictator. Beethoven was political and moral to the very core, in his whole cast of mind. Politics and morality are not unconnected. When I cancelled my Austrian appearances, I wanted people to ask themselves whether the tossing of Heine's books onto the Nazis' bonfires was about art or politics. To me, the two are inseparable and we are speaking about the same question today.

Did it cross your mind at the time that the country to which you had so demonstratively said "No!" was also the home and native land of musicians whom you hold to be the very greatest?

Of course. But the "No!" that I said then, I continue to maintain, because it has proved to be the right course. I am not saying what I am saying now because I suppose it has any effect or carries any weight. For me it is purely a question of conscience. It is just that I am not prepared to keep my mouth shut. I can't help it. I would not have been able to look at myself in the mirror afterwards if, after the choice fell on Haider, I were to have gone to a "Schubertiad" where the wealthy middle-class public tog themselves up in their *dirndls* and listen to Schubert with blissful smiles on their faces. It would have turned my stomach. Schubert is not about that. Most of my colleagues, I'm sad to say, are not disturbed by this; they were not plagued by such considerations and just carried on concertising. I always find myself having to think back to the Hitler days, even whilst being well aware that the situation is in no way comparable. All the same, it is wrong to lose one's sensitivity. We musicians need to respond like sensitive membranes to what is happening in society or politics, because we are not dolts who will play anywhere for anyone, if paid to do so. One cannot do that, it's degrading.

I am sure you are acquainted with the point of view of those who think differently: those who question whether one should stay truer to one's politics than to art. Is it right to sacrifice one's art on the altar of politics? That is the subject of Klaus Mann's and István Szabó's Mephisto *and also of* Taking Sides, *Szabó's film about Furtwängler.*

Furtwängler is a very good example. He is my favourite conductor. I haven't seen the film, but I did see the stage play by Ronald Harwood on which it is based, both in London and in Vienna, so I know it well. It's a good play, because it poses the question of how an artist should behave when in such a situation. Furtwängler was no Nazi, but unfortunately he was not a man of the calibre that a musician of such high standing should have been in that situation. He was no Nazi, yet he was delighted that rivals disappeared, leaving him alone amongst the great conductors—and this is where we get back to the subject—on the podium. Toscanini refused to appear on any German or Austrian platform, whilst the rest, Jews like Klemperer, Bruno Walter and Kleiber, were forced to emigrate, so only Furtwängler stayed, because the then young Karajan, who also stayed behind, could not yet be mentioned in the same breath. That situation suited him down to the ground. Yet he could have done something, because he did have the chance of not giving way to temptation but instead travelling to the United States, or else opting for voluntary exile in Switzerland.

But that is not to say, I take it, that you equate Nazi regimes with particular countries and particular peoples?

Not at all. I harbour no antagonism of any kind towards any people. I have great respect for the Germans, and it makes me very angry that wherever young Germans travel these days they have to put up with an incredible level of antipathy for something that they were not the cause of.

That antipathy perhaps no longer exists amongst the younger generation...

No, it is still there. In England people often behave as if they were still fighting the Second World War; the battle is still on.

Do you encounter similar anti-Hungarian hostility?

No, not at all, I encounter it solely against the Germans. And one of the reasons why it is so dreadfully unjust is that up till now only the Germans have made a genuine and serious effort to confront their past. There are extremist individuals and groups there too, of course, and there have been arson attacks on the homes of Turks, which is terrible, but after the event the wider public signalled their protest against the vile, barbarous act by marching in torchlight procession, with politicians and members of the government joining the protest, so there is no question of their sweeping their dirt under the carpet... Then again, Holocaust denial is dealt with as a crime, and I can see that there is a serious intent not to tolerate it. Along with that, virtually every German speaks some English, and for them the writers of Central Europe—and that includes those from Hungary as well as Serbs, Czechs and the rest—are considered part of a common heritage. The English-speaking world simply pays no attention to these writers, and that ignorance is extremely distressing. It is just not true, and I cannot myself subscribe to the idea that there is just one important language in the world, and that is English, and anyone who doesn't speak English can get lost. That is crass arrogance and it upsets and angers me. With the Germans, though, what I see—and the Kertészes tell me the same—is that they have a big part in making the literature of Central Europe, Hungary included, more widely known in the world.

I once heard you say that you like to read the great literary works—Shakespeare, Goethe, and so on—in the original language, and you would also like to do the same with Dante, but your Italian is not up to it...

I make the effort, but it doesn't run to that as yet.

How about Tolstoy and Pushkin?

Yes, I also read Russian. At school everyone used to moan about having to learn Russian, but I am now very grateful for that to have happened, because it is a magnificent language. What I truly regret, however, is that my generation did not get the chance to learn Latin. That is a great pity. But allow me to revert for a moment to the previous subject. Because here, in Central Europe, as you

know, the Jews of the Diaspora assimilated wholly to the culture that surrounded them, genuinely so in the case of German and Hungarian, and that is why the Jews there were incapable of imagining that what, unfortunately, befell them could take place, not even when it was already taking place before their very eyes. I loathe the Nazis, not the Germans. For me, despite everything, the preeminent culture is German culture. I like all things Anglo-Saxon, to say nothing of the French or Italian, and both Slav and Hungarian are part of me, but as far as music, literature and philosophy are concerned I cannot even conceive of anything that approaches the German contribution. Most importantly, I am convinced, it is unimaginable that those giants whom I admire so much would have acted any differently from our own Bartók in those dark days. Wagner, perhaps, might have been an exception, but even in his case I cannot imagine he would have collaborated, for all that he was truly not a nice person, though I don't dispute the greatness of his art. One thing I have come up against, though, and more than once at that, is when I have conducted the Bach *St. Matthew Passion,* which is always a tremendous experience for me, and people have asked, "How can you, a Jew, conduct an anti-Semitic work like that?"

What!

It shocked me too, but then it got me thinking that when a Jew is dumb, he really is dumb. That's how it is. I tried to explain that the piece is not about the conflict between Christians and Jews but about mankind itself, the human essence, and as such is a unique work of genius. The Gospel in itself is that, and Bach's music makes it even more human—so human that one feels love even for Judas. What a fantastic aria Bach gives him! What is at stake here is that when Pilate asked the multitude whom he should release, Jesus or Barabbas, the crowd cried out "Barabbas!". In other words, the story is about how the masses can be swayed and manipulated, and how frightening those masses are. As Frigyes Karinthy wrote prophetically in his masterful short story, "Christ and Barabbas" in 1918, each individual cries out "Jesus!" but en masse it comes out as "Barabbas!". How that could have happened—that too is a perennial topic.

You have mentioned Wagner. I know that you consider his music to be outstanding even though it is not to your taste. Does it simply not accord with your taste, or is it that "deficiency of humanity" which disturbs you?

I won't feel I have lost out on anything if I never hear a single note of Wagner again. But there are a great many people who feel differently, and I can understand them.

But is it the music you don't like, or its particular human quality?

I don't like the music either. I can't separate the two.

Don't you think that is perhaps somewhat naïve?

It may well be, but I sense the evil in it, the megalomania. Why could Wagner not write a single piece of chamber music, something on a smaller scale? A *Lied* or a string quartet—something that is not earth-shaking, not monumental? I find it much easier to love a small genre picture by Vermeer than one of those huge canvases by Veronese that cover the entire wall. It is not bigness that matters: small can also be beautiful, indeed it more often is so. At the same time, there are some things that are monumental and yet still miraculous. Wagner too can be miraculous, by the way; I don't dispute his worth.

It is intriguing to come across such a moral approach to music, and precisely on the part of a musician...

I have come across the same evil with a great many musicians in my own milieu, without wishing to name any names. Evil distinctly disturbs me. I know that others are far more indulgent about this; I am just incapable of it. But to go back to the original question: Bartók was truly a great composer, and he had a quite incredible purity. His extraordinary recitation of the text of the *Cantata profana* is so typical of him: so unassuming, so simple, so pure. If all I knew of his music was that one recording, it would still have a big effect on me, because what is marvellous in Bartók is not just the compositional genius but the man as well.

I know that the composers you admire are not always present in your life and repertoire—Mozart, for example, you have often said, was your childhood love, whilst you were always working on Chopin but only started to play his works in public after reaching a certain age, and you have put off playing the Beethoven sonatas until your fifties... What is it that determines whether a piece of music is a childhood love or a mature passion?

On that point it is my instincts that dictate... I have always felt Bach to be extremely important to me, and I always had an affinity, from a very young age, for Haydn, Mozart and Schubert, but not for Beethoven—that was always a more difficult business. Harder? Well, everyone says, as I do, that playing Mozart is the hardest of all, because he is so simple, so unaffected and self-explanatory. If a child has a feeling for Mozart one cannot hope for a more perceptive, authentic interpretation than that. According to some very shrewd heads, only a child or a wise old musician can really play Mozart; between the two extremes it becomes very tough. To put it another way, one cannot learn how to play Mozart, that's why it is so tough. One can learn how to play Beethoven, but it is almost as tough. Beethoven lived a comparatively long time, leading a very hard life, full of struggles, and all that is there in the music. I am familiar with Mozart's manuscripts, of course, and it is simply untrue that he never made revisions. Nor does Mozart's music have that porcelain immutability that snobs are fond of talking about: it is full of drama. But there is no struggle in it, nor such violent outpourings of passion as with Beethoven. It's a commonplace, of course, but it is customary to

compare Beethoven to Michelangelo, because there is something sculpturesque about him. Mozart is more like a great painter; there are no unhewn granite and marble-like surfaces in his music, whereas Beethoven is all about that. With him one has to grapple with the material, and to do that one has to mature—at least as far as I am concerned. That was not easy for me, and it is only now that the time has come when I truly understand, but now I am an ever greater admirer of Beethoven's music. Beethoven was God for Pál Kadosa, my teacher at the Budapest Academy of Music. Boy that I was, I was close to outright rebellion over that. "Why is he constantly yakking on about Beethoven", I thought to myself, when here we have Schubert, whose music then was hardly being played by anyone at the Academy. So, almost as a protest, I started to involve myself with the Schubert sonatas. Beethoven was someone to keep a mental note of. Everything was determined by romanticism: if one read the writings of the two key music critics of those days, Bence Szabolcsi and Aladár Tóth, it was Beethoven, Beethoven, all the time, the Fifth Symphony this, the *Eroica* that... Of course, Beethoven is not quite as simple as that either: he too has his lyrical and his epic and his dramatic and a great many other kinds of works. There is his *An die ferne Geliebte* song cycle, which has to be seen as the font for Schumann's entire romantic *Lieder* corpus, the song cycles. But somehow the idea that Beethoven was a deadly serious composer had become implanted in the collective consciousness of music criticism. That disconcerted me at the time, but now, with an older head—though my love for Bach, Schubert, Haydn and Mozart is unchanged—I have at last grasped that there is something elemental in Beethoven. He has something marvellous to say, something utterly magical and at the same time utterly human. With Mozart I have the feeling that I am dealing with an otherworldly genius; one feels oneself to be little more than a clodhopper, hardly daring to interpret him and constantly feeling oneself to be maladroit. Mozart resists exaggeration of any kind; if one misjudges the character or tempo, even just a little bit, the whole thing falls apart.

One is feeble in comparison with Mozart?

Indeed. Beethoven is much more generous. He is miraculous as well, but he is one of us, the most outstanding amongst us. Someone once put it very nicely: Beethoven is on the way to heaven, whereas Mozart comes from heaven.

Yet you yourself once said in an interview that "the spiritual message of music is most discernible in Bach", and you added, "It cannot be pure chance that neither Bach, nor Haydn, nor Beethoven, nor Schubert was an atheist."

How can I put it? That is again something that springs from my own fatelessness. Because the reason for it is music, art, and that is why I cannot be an atheist. I just cannot imagine or conceive that this is all just matter: there has to be something spiritual in it. Those men have long been dead, but their works are still alive amongst us as eternal messages. I believe in something transcenden-

tal... something more, stronger than matter. The great men to whom I am most indebted were not atheists. Even Bartók, though his earlier works give no hint of it, in the second movement of his Piano Concerto No. 3, the *Adagio religioso,* written when he was close to death—there it is literally present, a wonderful, pared-down chorale melody, which can be traced back to the Beethoven late string quartets and, naturally, to Bach... More and more, I sense and perceive that one has to believe in something, whether that be art or work or God, but something... What else is left otherwise? An extraordinarily empty, cynical, commercialised world. People then flee from it, of course. In the United States I have seen the programmes of television evangelists a few times: they are appalling. People flee from the emptiness, the nothingness, into that; but the whole thing is completely sham, full of pseudo spirituality, and pseudo ritual.

Still, it obviously has such a sway over people because they experience something together there, and that sentiment sweeps over them.

For me—and I mean it in the good sense—Bach's music is a rite. We are together via Bach's spirit, but at the same time everyone has the individual freedom to form whatever associations or thoughts he or she wishes. That is what is so glorious in art, that associative freedom, and I marvel at that hugely. It is why I also marvel so greatly at church music: there is freedom but not anarchy, order always rules... An artist creates within a framework, yet he is still a genius, and what he creates is characteristic of him alone. What order there is in music, and yet how much freedom is given by the sonata form. Or think of a mass. That also has its order: the Kyrie, then the Gloria, then the Credo and then the Sanctus, and yet what freedom! Amazing works have come into being in that way, each one different and yet there is still that order to them all. I like to feel that order.

Could this be why you live in Florence? I have to say I have not yet been able to make out quite why you live in Florence, which has a rather thin musical life.

No, I don't live in Florence for the music but for the art, the visual arts. The period in the visual arts that runs from, say, Giotto to Michelangelo is the one I like best; after that, in my view, it has been downhill all the way. That is the period one encounters at its finest and most integral in Florence and its environs. I adore Rome as well, but that period is precisely what it lacks... Even Michelangelo is already on the way out of the Renaissance; in fact, he demolishes that wonderful harmony in every one of his works. I admire him, but I am much more partial to Donatello, for instance. Donatello is exquisite. He is the centre of the world.

Are you the kind of art-lover who continually seeks to acquaint himself with new things, always moving on to the next interest lest he should miss out on something, or do you see yourself more as someone who tries to learn more and more and about familiar things, seeking to deepen rather than widen your understanding?

As a viewer, a listener, a consumer, I tend to be more of a sort of ghost, with my favourite haunts to which I constantly return. I don't want to see everything. I am not particularly fond of Brussels, for example, but in the Musée d'Art Ancien there is a room of paintings by Pieter Brueghel the Elder, and I have no wish to see anything else, just them; there are eight paintings, and I won't leave those out if I am in Brussels. It's the same with music, though here it's a bit wider ranging since, after all, I don't just play one and the same Bach fugue but, so to say, all of Bach's fugues because I can't truly know even just one of them until I know them all. Everything depends on everything else. But one also has to recognise that one has only a finite capacity, and one has to concentrate on what is most important.

Is that why you don't play contemporary music, or only rarely? I read somewhere that you are worried you might damage yourself by playing contemporary music.

Very rarely, and not enough, or not as much as I should or ought to, but in all honesty there is very little contemporary music that satisfies me either emotionally or aesthetically. I am not objective, but Kurtág was my teacher, and I am especially fond of him: I really do consider him to be a stupendous composer. I play some Kurtág, but not a lot. Contemporary music makes demands on performers that are physically testing, indeed debilitating. There are many who don't agree, saying that isn't true, it is the same sort of burden as anything else. But I believe that it is not the same! The approach to producing sound is quite different. The piano keyboard has to be touched in a different way... Kurtág himself is a brilliant pianist, but there is a bunch of composers today who write for the piano but don't know how to play the instrument. They notate something from a theoretical viewpoint, treating the piano as a percussion instrument, seeking to produce specific sounds. They call for a prepared piano, one with bits of rubber and nails and screws wedged between the wires, which distorts the sound and might wreck the instrument. A concert grand these days costs $150,000, and I'm unwilling to stuff a bunch of nails and screws into one and ruin it. They don't have any respect for the instrument.

You have great respect for instruments because, as far as I know, you use a different piano for each composer. And you have these shipped from one concert to the next, all around the world.

Yes, I ship them around; half the money I earn is spent on pianos, because it is so important to me that I can play on my own instrument, and that I have my own piano technician there. It makes the concert so much better. It is not an extravagance, if one can afford it, but a very important aspect. People are unaware of how many compromises pianists have to make. A violinist takes his instrument with him, whereas a pianist sits down and plays on what is put in front of him—and that may be decent, indifferent, bad or lousy, but only very occasionally truly good.

Even if you give just a single recital, the piano still comes along to that one recital and is then taken back?

Yes, but I usually do concerts in series, we plan it that way.

How many pianos do you own?

Oh, a great many. I'm ashamed to say just how many, because someone else would be delighted to have just one. But it just happened that way. At the beginning I didn't have one, now I have around a dozen. Most of them are housed with an Italian piano company and they deliver them to my concerts. Then I have homes in London and Florence. In Florence I have three pianos, in London two, so I use them between trips...

You said in an interview once that "the most important task left to me is to work my way systematically through the Beethoven sonatas." "The most important task left to me"... that sounds as if you were saying, "That is my purpose in this world."

Yes. Well, it's the sort of thing one can say on reaching one's fifties. But it really is a big and serious task, to climb the sort of mountain whose summit one will not attain.

Is it not enough to give concerts in different parts of the world and be hugely successful? That your concerts in Hungary are sold out several years in advance?

That's all very nice, but it's not important. What is important is becoming familiar with works and penetrating ever further into them. But there are other tasks, of course, quite apart from the Beethoven sonatas, and the tasks I have set myself up till now are not completed. So, that still carries on. I am engaged on a series of Schubert sonata recitals; I played them many times during 1997, the bicentenary of his birth, but not once since then. After five or six years I started playing the late ones again, and it was utterly different: I could see much further, the horizon had expanded. What had made it expand? I had lived five more years and studied Beethoven a great deal, and in that light Schubert had somehow taken on an entirely new aspect.

You put in a lot of musicological groundwork when preparing a work for performance? Is that also true of other performers?

I don't think so, though it would not come amiss. I am not a trained musicologist, but that facet does interest me. I have many friends and acquaintances who are musicologists, and in my view that's useful and all to the good, because it is sadly the case that performers and musicologists are usually hostile to one another, viewing the other camp with considerable misgivings. No peaceful coexistence there.

Do musicologists think a musician is some sort of instinctual being?

An instinctual, uncultivated barbarian. Whereas artists look on musicologists in the way one would look on a sex therapist: they write about it because they can't do it. That is sometimes valid, but it is mistaken all the same. We need to learn how we can learn from one another, to profit from the other's knowledge. That is part of the reason why I spend a lot of time on it, but of course the theory is of interest in its own right. Then again, to speak and write about music—that too greatly interests me. I try to write small papers and essays, and maybe the time has come to put them together in a book.

Do you write in Hungarian?

No, in English or German, but then I translate it (into Hungarian) myself.

Do you speak English and German as easily as you do Hungarian?

On the whole, though my Hungarian is a wee bit better, all the same. That reminds me of Antal Doráti, whom I was very fond of: he was a wonderful old chap, and not just a brilliant conductor but a Renaissance man besides, who, when he wrote an opera, set down the libretto straight off in four languages, one below the other. That really tickled my fancy, and since then I have thought it is better to do one's own translation of anything one writes, rather than letting someone else, even though it means my having to write in a foreign language. I will never write English like a native Englishman, but it still upsets me when an editor comes and corrects what I write, which has a Hungarian or Central European fire in it, toning it down into cold-blooded English. I make use of certain adjectives that are full of passion, for instance, and those are then amended to something else, because that corresponds better to their temperament, only it is not what I mean to say!

Do you find any difference between Central European, Western European and American or Anglo-Saxon performers? How does a pianist from Central Europe, say, differ from one from Britain?

I don't perceive any such difference with pianists.

And with musicians in general?

Possibly in their tastes and choice of repertoire. There is what you could call an Anglo-Saxon approach to music, there is a French approach, there is a Russian approach, and there is... let us call it a Central European, or rather Austro-German, approach, which takes in us, Hungarians. But that is just an approximation, because I am often asked what is the essence of the Hungarian music school, or of the Hungarian piano school, and the only answer I can give is that, in my opinion, there is no such thing. Just consider the three of us, Zoltán Kocsis, Dezső Ránki and myself: all three of us were pupils of Pál Kadosa, yet for the life of me I profess I can discern nothing shared or the same, or even similar, in the

way we play. What was so magnificent about Pál Kadosa is that he let everyone follow his own direction, though he was an artist of truly Central European tastes; his taste and sense of proportion were devoid of all pretentiousness, yet that ardent emotional range of his was typically Central European. If you listen to a Russian, it is like reading Dostoievsky—all extremes, no moderation of any kind. In the Anglo-Saxon school of playing, on the other hand—and it's something that greatly irritates me, incidentally—there is a kind of distancing and professionalism; they like to entertain, not to go too deeply into things. The chief quality of the Central European school is that it delves very deep.

Iván Fischer told me how surprised he was by what he experienced with British orchestras: a player who rested for a few bars would sit there impassively, staring blankly into space. He did not understand what was happening at first, but then he realised that at such moments the musicians were memorising some other work that they would be performing next.

With one British orchestra I have even seen cases where a player would read something like a motoring magazine and then snap back when it was necessary. The moment a trumpet player has a ten-bar rest he occupies himself with something else. Their attitude is highly professional, I have to say, but I detest that professionalism. I prefer someone who is an amateur but at least an enthusiast. British orchestras can play as well on a first run-through, sight reading, as those elsewhere could only do after, say, ten rehearsals. On the other hand, they are usually incapable of stretching beyond that sight-reading level, and that bothers me. I much prefer German orchestras or the Festival Orchestra here, which get much lower marks for their sight reading, but once one has started working with them they are already much better on the second run-through, still better on the third, even better on the fourth—in other words, it makes sense to rehearse. The British will ask what is the need for a rehearsal: we play the piece very well straight from the score, and a second rehearsal won't bring out anything new. I have often been in that situation, because I conduct the truly first-class Philharmonia Orchestra in London, and I always ask them to give me four or five rehearsals, which they do. But nothing happens between the first and fifth run-through: there is nothing I can do to shift them, to persuade them to dig deeper, because they will not acknowledge that there is another dimension. They just do not acknowledge it. "What's he going on about? He's asking for something that doesn't exist! We play the notes—what more do you want?" I expect more, and get much more, from the music than that materialism. The way the notes are sounded, of course, they sound out together, the tempi are right, the pitches are in tune, the balance is fine—what more do you want?, they ask. What we speak about here, in Central and Eastern Europe, is another dimension that cannot be marked out but does exist. We believe that it exists. I believe that it exists. ❧

Tibor Hajdu–György Litván

Count Michael Károlyi in Wartime England

From His Correspondence, 1941–1946

Count Michael Károlyi, President of the Hungarian Republic (1918–1919), spent a quarter of a century in exile after the fall of the republic. He lived mostly in Paris but, in 1938, sensing the approach of war, he moved to England, where his children were at school. He made considerable efforts to organise Hungarian anti-Fascist resistance in Britain and overseas. To this end he founded the New Democratic Hungary Club, where thirty-eight lectures in English were arranged during the duration of the war. The lecturers included Arthur Koestler, Jan Masaryk, Harold Laski, Erika Mann, R.W. Seton Watson, Stephen Spender and A.J.P. Taylor. Countess Károlyi was an active partner in all her husband's endeavours. Her many contacts in the world of the arts proved to be of considerable help to their cause. Károlyi nurtured contacts with the establishment, the press and the BBC, but they, aware of the Horthy regime's aversion for Károlyi, were reluctant to allow him any prominence while there was some hope that the Kállay government would break with Hitler. After the German Army occupied Hungary on 19 March 1944 without encountering any resistance, the British government, in April 1944, offered effective support to the nascent Hungarian Council in Great Britain. The Council encompassed hitherto separate democratic organisations with a total membership of several thousand Hungarian exiles. Károlyi became the chairman and reported on the Council's activities to Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, in a letter written in June 1944. Károlyi also kept in touch with Foreign Office and Ministry of Information officials. An exchange of letters with George H. Hall, an Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office, is included in our selection.

Tibor Hajdu's
books include A magyarországi Tanácsköztársaság *(The Hungarian Soviet Republic, 1969) and a biography of Count Mihály Károlyi.*
György Litván,
who headed the Institute for the History of the 1956 Revolution between 1991–1999, has published widely on modern Hungarian history.

As far as the state of hostilities permitted, Károlyi maintained a lively correspondence with those Hungarian anti-Fascist organisations in the USA, Canada, Latin America and other overseas countries, which accepted his intellectual guidance. These included the American Federation of Democratic Hungarians, headed by Rusztem Vámbéry, a professor of law; the American Committee for a New Democratic Hungary, headed by Oszkár Jászi, once a member of the Károlyi administration, who taught at Oberlin College; and the Chicago Hungarian radicals whose spiritual inspiration was the artist László Moholy Nagy. A letter from each of them is included. The many Hungarians in Hollywood are represented by Béla Lugosi, who made his name in early horror films. He had left Hungary in 1919.

After the German Army had been expelled from the country, Károlyi did his best to help the new Hungary. A number of letters dated 1945 and 1946 present certain aspects of these activities. It was very important for those coming into power to be internationally recognised as democratic. Károlyi therefore wrote to Sir Walter Citrine, the General Secretary of the TUC, whom he knew as a thirties anti-Fascist, urging that the Hungarian Trade Unions be invited to participate in the foundation of the World Federation of Trade Unions. Károlyi's help was engaged for many similar actions, particularly before the November 1945 parliamentary elections, when Hungary's reputation in the West was still very shaky.

The tough struggle on the part of Hungarian democrats abroad in support of the Hungarian minority in jeopardy in Slovakia, and the right of return for prisoners of the war, the deported and refugees, were also part of Károlyi's efforts to help Hungary. A reply sent by the historian A.J.P. Taylor, an old friend, shows how prejudiced against Hungary public opinion in the West was at the time.

Taylor's letter is telling precisely because he was an authority on the preliminaries of war. He could by no means be reckoned amongst those demanding revenge, nor could he be called anti-Hungarian. He simply shared the aversion felt for those nations which, for whatever reason, were on the wrong side in the anti-Nazi war, as well as the sympathy temporarily felt by a part of the British public for the Soviets soon after the war. He gave no thought to whether the Slovaks, of all people, had any moral justification for persecuting the Hungarians. The reference to "Bethlen & Co." indicates Károlyi's fear that the UK government would support not the Hungarian democrats but Count István Bethlen, the former prime minister (1921–1931) and his kind, who could be described as Anglophiles in the twenties but whose half-hearted attempts later failed to put a brake on Hungary's pro-Nazi orientation.

The last three letters reveal the efforts made by Count and Countess Károlyi to provide assistance to suffering Hungarians, chiefly in the form of medicines and baby foods. Countess Károlyi, née Catherine Andrássy, wrote numerous articles and appeals. She asked George Orwell to help with their publication. One of the results of their co-operation was the article "The Politics of Starvation", which Orwell published in *Tribune* on 17 January 1946. Orwell castigated those

who objected to the idea that England, which also had to do without, should feed starving children in Germany and Hungary. In another article, published by *Tribune* on 20 December 1946, Orwell expressed his indignation at people enjoying Christmas turkeys imported from Hungary, yet showing indifference when it came to starving Hungarian artists and journalists. (Both included in *The Collected Essays,* vol. 4, 1968.)

In January 1946 Count Károlyi himself turned to two members of the Labour government, his old acquaintance Ellen Wilkinson, the Secretary for Education, and John Hynd, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, as well as Labour MP Tom Driberg, to request aid for Hungary. Their efforts were not entirely in vain, as correspondence with the British Red Cross and various pharmaceutical manufacturers and wholesalers shows. We include a letter from F. Thornton, head of the Home Office Drugs Branch, reporting that the Home Secretary had licensed the export of drugs to Hungary.

These letters, written in English and selected from Károlyi's *Collected Correspondence* (1945–1949), which appeared earlier this year, provide some idea of the activities of Count and Countess Károlyi. Letters written between 1941 and 1944 will appear in volume 4 (1930–1944), currently in preparation.

*

Arthur Koestler to Michael Károlyi

25th October, 1941, London

Dear Károlyi,

Thank you very much for your letter. I was very moved by the review in Horizon and wanted to get in touch with you when I was last time in London; a certain Mr Goldfinger proposed to arrange a meeting, but the things he talked had such an irritating effect that on second thoughts I preferred to postpone our meeting, fearing that it would be spoiled; and the day after I had to rejoin my unit. But I shall be on leave in London from Oct. 30 to Nov. 6 and will ring you up to ask you whether we could meet.

I have a very vivid memory of our lunch with Willi. (A few days ago I had a letter from Babette; she is in Mexico.) Friedrich Wolf was in Vernet with me; he has acquired U.S.S.R.-citizenship while in internment and was allowed to travel to Russia just before the Germans came in. Aranyossi is the man referred to as "Barna" in the episode on p. 126 of "Scum of the Earth". He was still in Vernet when I left; I do not know what has happened to him since.

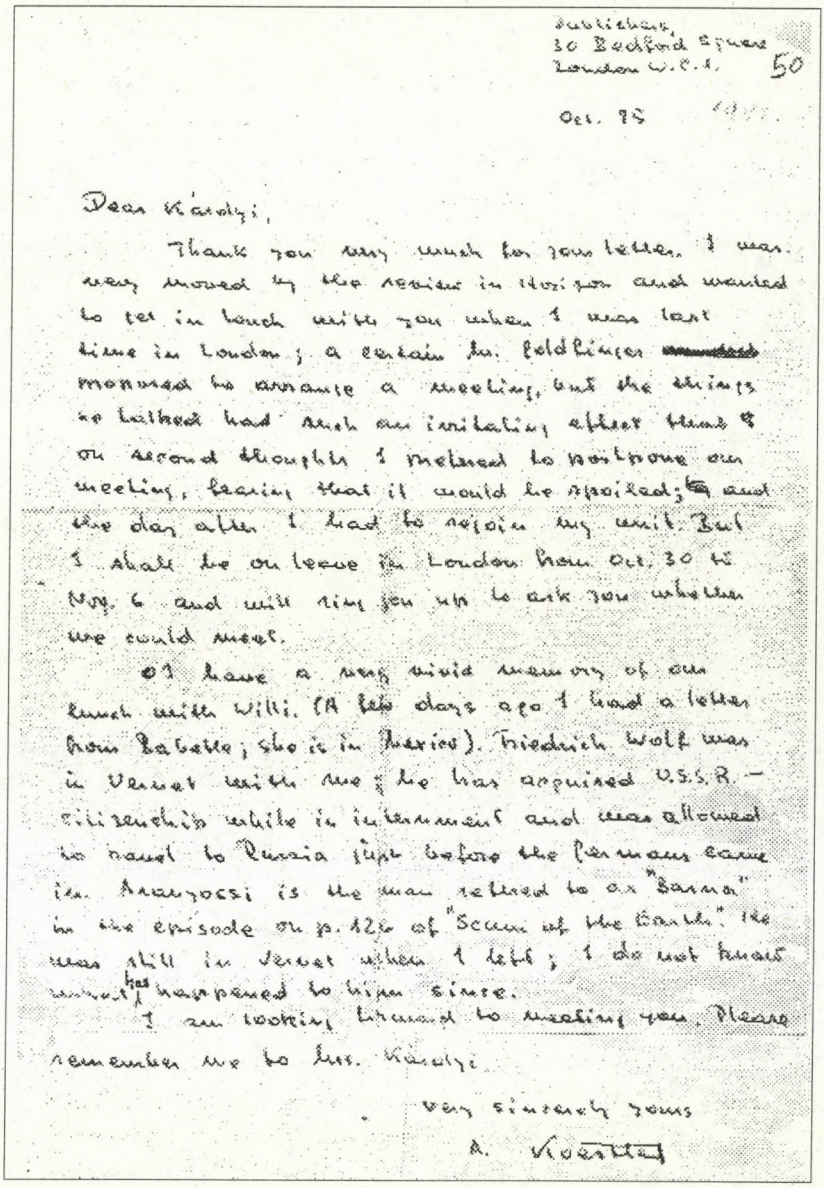
I am looking forward to meeting you. Please remember me to Mrs. Károlyi.

Very sincerely yours,
A. Koestler

PIL 704.f.77.ö.e.

Koestler served in the British Army during the War, that is why he was not as active in Károlyi's movement as in the months of its foundation.

Ernest (Ernő) Goldfinger was a Hungarian-born London architect, Károlyi's old friend, later a member of the Royal Academy of Arts. "Willi" is Willi Münzenberg, a German Communist, in charge of a number of Comintern front organisations, and as such Koestler's boss. He broke



Publishers,
30 Bedford Square
London W.C.1. 50

Oct. 15

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Very sincerely yours

A. Koestler

with Moscow in 1938, at the same time as Koestler. He was killed trying to escape in 1940. Babette was his wife. Friedrich Wolf was a well-known German writer, a Communist, father of Markus Wolf, the GDR spy chief. Pál Aranyossi was a Hungarian Communist journalist. He survived Vernet and returned to Hungary. In the mentioned passage, Koestler describes how cruelly they dealt with him in Vernet.

Arthur Koestler to Michael Károlyi

London, 15 November 1941

Dear Károlyi,

Enclosed a first (rough) memorandum on the subject which I mentioned when I saw you. It should be treated, on Winant's request, at the moment relatively confidentially (meaning no press-publicity).

What a pity that we could not have a longer talk; but all my leave and the little free time I have here goes to this matter, (which means a correspondence of 5–10 letters per day without a steno). I spoke to several BBC-people, mentioning Ctss. Andrássy's name and yours as far as it seemed appropriate; but things seem to be in a terrible muddle and rather hopeless for the time being—i.e. as long as the whole problem of relations to Hungary is still in suspense. I also mentioned the matter to Kingsley Martin, as agreed—he hasn't answered or at least not yet.

I have a feeling that the best one can do for the moment is to wait and not to appear too early on the stage—I mean not before things have ripened to a point where a Free Hung. movement would be welcome in *all* quarters.

Both Daphne and I thoroughly enjoyed that all too short hour in your home. I wish we could repeat it soon; and I wish I could express in less hurried lines the feeling of admiration and friendship—if you allow me to say so—I have for you.

Yours ever,
A. Koestler

And I wish I could convince you not to postpone the writing of the second volume of your memoirs. I spoke about it to Cape who seemed rather keen on it.

PIL 704. f. 77. ö.e.

John G. Winant—US Ambassador in the U.K. during the War. Perhaps Koestler was writing about Károlyi's projected visit to the States which fell through. After a few days, Kingsley Martin contacted Countess Károlyi. Daphne Hardy, a sculptor, translated *The Scum of the Earth* into English, the last book Koestler wrote in German. Jonathan Cape was Koestler's publisher, who later did publish the second volume of Károlyi's memoirs. Kingsley Martin edited the *New Statesman* and *Nation* for many years.

Arthur Koestler to Michael Károlyi

Oakley Farm, 6th December 1941.

Dear Károlyi,

I am dictating this in hospital where I am lying with a nervous breakdown. That is the reason why I didn't answer your letter before. I am not yet in a state to write letters, but since we are both in the danger of becoming technically enemy aliens overnight, and since I am in a giddy state, my thoughts are permanently turning around you and your past, and the future of all of us. So this is just a friendly greeting to both of you.

Yours ever,
A. Koestler

P.S. I wrote once more to Kingsley Martin on the matter you mentioned.

PIL. 704. f. 77. ö.e.

Oszkár Jászi, Rusztem Vámbéry to Count Michael Károlyi

18 April 1943, New York

Mr President:

We rejoice at the celebration of the Hungarian resistance against her thousand year old foe. Both the American Federation of Democratic Hungarians and the American Commitee for a New Democratic Hungary send their heartiest greetings and best wishes to the meeting whose chairman is as symbolic of true democratic efforts in the English speaking world as you Mr President are of the struggle of the Magyar people for freedom.

We particularly appreciate the fraternal participation of our neighbours in the Danube valley being aware of the fact which two immortal geniuses of the Magyar people: Louis Kossuth and Andrew Ady equally emphasised, that in order to be free: Magyars as well as our Slav,

Rumanian, and Austrian brethren are bound to meet on the barricades of common thought.

PIL 704. f. 79 ö.e.

Countess Károlyi to Arthur Koestler

6 October 1943, London

Dear Koestler,

Would you let me know if November the 11 would suit you to hold your lecture in our Centre. We will have to know this date much in advance so as to make the necessary publicity.

Useless to say how much we are looking forward to this and how grateful we are that you are so kind to give us this pleasure.

6.30 p.m is the best time for our public and we hope to have a lot of foreigners and English people.

Thanking you again
Yours sincerely

PIL. 704. f. 127. ö.e.

Koestler in fact gave his lecture, which proved highly controversial. Some of Károlyi's more pro-Soviet supporters, particularly Mr and Mrs Karl Polányi, objected.

Béla Lugosi to Michael Károlyi

2 February 1944, Los Angeles

Your call to the Hungarian people is inspiring us in our anti-fascist work stop Please send all cable message for our March fifteenth memorial meetings which will be held by democratic council branches all over United States, also Canada and Mexico— Sincerely

PIL. 704.f. 80 ö.e.

Michael Károlyi to Anthony Eden

2 June 1944, London

Dear Mr Eden,

I feel that I should advise you of the formation of a Hungarian Council in Great Britain, of which I have myself been elected President. This body represents the three Hungarian organisations previously existing in this country: the New Democratic Hungary Movement, the Association of Free Hungarians in Great Britain and the Hungarian Club in London. At the same time it is in full accord with the Democratic Hungarian movements in the United States as well as with the cooperating groups in the Latin American countries. It may, therefore, fairly claim to represent the overwhelming majority of democratic Hungarians living abroad, irrespective of political party and opinion.

We feel that this is a productive achievement in the middle of such a universally destructive war; and that it contains a certain promise of a more hopeful future for our country. I enclose a copy of my "Call to Action", from which you will see that our objectives are to unite all Hungarians to fight German and Hungarian fascism, to encourage our soldiers to surrender to the Red Army and to persuade Hungarians to join Marshal Tito's partizan armies. It is also the aim of the Council to help in building up a democratic, progressive Hungary which would be a barrier against future German aggression, would collaborate peacefully with our Slav neighbours and would base its foreign policy on the principles of the Teheran declaration.

I should much appreciate the opportunity of calling on you, dear Mr Eden, when you can find a suitable opportunity to receive me. If the pressure of your duties at this critical time makes it inconvenient, however, I should be happy to have the

opportunity of meeting the Parliamentary Under-Secretary. We can then, if you please, discuss the matter further.

Yours sincerely

PRO, F.O. 371/39243/C6 7482

László Moholy Nagy to Michael Károlyi

9 August 1944, Chicago

Dear Mr President:

With great interest and devotion we studied your letter received the other day. We feel that you are doing a magnificent job in London which deserves all the help that we can give you for the benefit of suffering Hungary. The chief impresson we gathered was that through your activities you have been able to unify all the Hungarian factions in England which I hope will help in the realization of your plans.

Here in America as you are undoubtedly informed, the movement towards unity goes somewhat slower but we all have feeling that the greater part of the reactionary elements are already immobilized and that they are losing grip of the fraternities, clubs, associations and sick benefit societies.

The fourth term campaign for the election of President Roosevelt has apparently so far been most successful in unifying the Hungarian language groups, at least in Chicago. The largest Hungarian societies in the country, Verhovay, Tarsalgo, Bridgeport Rákóczi, which have withheld themselves so far from our Movement, came to the Hungarian Democratic Council the other day with the request for cooperation in connection with the re-election of President Roosevelt. This is a most favorable sign as the commmon platform will give us an opportunity to destroy the suspicion which was artifically created and fostered by the reactionary literature of the Magyar Szövetség, who are afraid to lose the financial support given to them by the above societies.

You may have already heard that we plan to have a national conference in September or early October which, if we are lucky enough, may develop into an all American Conference with delegates also from Canada, Central and South America. It would be wonderful if you yourself could be present at this Conference:

Knowing how urgently you need money for the upkeep of the movement we have again transferred $50.00 to you. We are aware of the pitiful smallness of these sums which we send you but believe me, Mr President, the only way to get money for you from the Hungarians here would be if you yourself came to this country. This would not only ensure financial support but also the unification of all groups sincerely interested in a democratic Hungary.

I do not know whether you would now be able to get the money which was collected for you during the First World War and which has been sequestered by the U.S. Government. But I almost think you might try again to secure it as the situation may be ripe for such a step.

We shall have meetings here in some few days with the representatives of the various societies and we hope very much that what has already happened in Los Angeles and Milwaukee, will happen all over the United States of America, namely a unification of all the movements.

By the way I would like to tell you that one of my friends in England, Mr John A. Thwaites, 75 Cromwell Road, S.W. 7, has been interested and informed for a long time about the Hungarian situation in this country and about your plans in England. He has shown himself most worthy of my confidence and I believe you may also place confidence in him. In most cases I have found his judgement of the situation very reliable.

With deep respect in the name of the Hungarian American Democratic Council, Chicago Chapter,

Yours very sincerely,

P.S. About Vince I cannot say too much. We all feel that for the time being he is unable to work with a heterogeneous group as he cannot bear other opinions and never wishes to subordinate himself to the decision of the group. Maybe that this will change in time but at present there is no need or possibility to force the issue.

PIL. 704.f. 80 ö.e.

Thwaites was a British Consul, *en poste* in many countries. During the war he was on the staff of the MoI. He helped Károlyi a great deal in getting his movement accepted. Sándor Vince was a Hungarian Social-Democrat exile. His more moderate views occasionally got him into trouble with Moholy Nagy's group.

George H. Hall to Michael Károlyi

15 August 1944, London

My dear Count,

I must apologise for the delay in replying to your letter of the 27th June last, in which you elaborated some of the points which you raised in connexion with propaganda towards Hungary and the stimulation of resistance among Hungarians, when you came to see me on the 9th June. I was anxious to ensure that the proposals which you made at our interview and in your letter were carefully and sympathetically considered by the authorities concerned and I am now able to give you the following information in reply.

You suggested that facilities might be given to the Hungarian Council in Great Britain for three fifteen minute broadcasts to Hungary every week as a supplement to the Hungarian service by the B.B.C. This proposal has been carefully examined. As you will understand however the time at the disposal of the B.B.C. has to be very carefully allocated between the many programmes which their facilities serve and I am afraid that it has been decided that in present circumstances it would not be feasible to make the extra call upon the B.B.C.'s facilities which your proposal would involve. I regret therefore that it is impossible at present to give the Hungarian Council or yourself facilities for broadcasting at regular intervals. I understand however that the B.B.C. are already reporting and giving considerable space to statements which have been made from time to time by the Hungarian Council. You will no doubt have seen the statement to this effect made by Mr Brendan Bracken in reply to a question in the House of Commons on the 2nd August. I can also assure you that consideration will always be given to the possibility of reporting any interview given by you in your personal capacity to any newspaper or news agency. You also asked whether it could be arranged for your recent "Call to Action" to be distributed among the Hungarian people. I understand that at present this would be impracticable, though the point will be kept under review.

In addition you suggested, when you came to see me, that resistance in Hungary might be stimulated by the despatch from this country of some Hungarians to join Marshall Tito's forces in Yugoslavia, and by the presence of your wife and yourself in Cairo. I would like to express my appreciation of the spirit in which these suggestions were made. They have been sympathetically considered by the competent authorities of His Majesty's Government who find however that [illegible] for the time being. In the circumstances I do not think that any useful purpose would be served at present by your going to Cairo. I should like to thank you, however, for

your offer to place yourself at the service of the Allied cause in this way and to assure you that I shall always be glad to receive from you any information or proposals which you think may serve to hasten the defeat of Germany and of the Hungarian quislings who are assisting her.

Yours sincerely,

PRI F.O. 371/39272/C8655

Brendan Bracken: Minister of Information from 1941 to 1945.

Michael Károlyi to George H. Hall

31 August 1944, London

My dear Mr Hall,

Thank you for your cordial letter of the 15th inst. I much appreciate the care which has been given to considering the proposals which I ventured to make in the common interest. I should, however, correct one misapprehension. It was never my intention to ask that additional time be devoted to Hungary. I hoped only that brief periods from the time already allotted might be used for messages and protests from Hungarians to Hungarians at home.

I did indeed note the Minister of Information's generous recognition of the Hungarian Council in the House of Commons on August 2nd, and his announcement that a number of our statements and declarations had been broadcast in the Hungarian service. In view of this kindness in accepting material—and especially in the critical situation which has arisen with events in Rumania and Hungary—it seems to me that immediate contact should be established between the BBC. and the Council. I would therefore suggest a weekly conference between our representative and the European Intelligence Department and the Hungarian Editor of the BBC., for the preparation of suitable material. In view of your and Mr Bracken's assurance I believe that this will be a welcome proposal. I would, however, venture to stress its urgency, if full advantage is to be taken of the situation in Hungary.

I must also thank you for your kind assurance that consideration will be given to the possibility of reporting any interview which I may give in my personal capacity. My unity of aim with His Majesty's Government is, I think, well established; and I naturally welcome the opportunity of conveying the common democratic view to my own people.

Finally I should be very grateful if you would be able to receive me as soon as it is convenient to you, because in the present critical situation several other points have arisen which I should like very much to discuss with you.

Yours sincerely,

PRO F.O. 371/39273/C 11759

On August 23rd 1944 Romania surrendered and afterwards fought Germany. Károlyi hoped in vain that something similar would happen in Hungary.

Michael Károlyi to Anthony Eden

4 September 1944, London

Your Excellency,

The Hungarian Council in Great Britain has been formed to promote and stimulate the fight of the Hungarian people against the Germans. All our efforts are directed to achieve that Hungary should defy the Germans and its present regime in the belief that only thus can a better future be secured for the Hungarian nation. It is in this spirit that we beg to submit the following suggestion to His Britannic Majesty's Government, to the Government of the Soviet Union and to the Government of the United States of America.

In the present final phase of the war Hungary is still fighting on the side of the Germans. The Hungarian nation, although probably aware that they are fighting for a lost cause, have not taken so far the decision to liquidate the German Alliance—a decision taken already by Rumania and Bulgaria. It is our belief that even in this final phase of the war Hungary's decision to leave the German Alliance and fight on the side of the Allies could contribute to the shortening of the war. The way of retreat of the German army in south-east Europe leads through Hungary. If Hungary opens her passes to the Red Army then the Hungarian army together with the Red Army could cut off the German way of retreat and facilitate the Red Army's advance to Austria.

The Hungarian Council in Great Britain believes that such a Hungarian decision could greatly be promoted by a joint declaration of the Governments of His Britannic Majesty, the Soviet Union and the United States of America giving assurance in respect of the following points:

1. That the United Nations wish to uphold the independence of Hungary.

2. That the treatment to be meted out to Hungary will depend on the contribution which in this last moment she still may lend to the shortening of the war.

3. That although the settlements reached with the assistance of Hitlerite Germany before and during the war have been repudiated by the United Nations, the final settlement of frontiers will be decided at the Peace Conference.

4. Should Hungary turn against Germany, the armies of the United Nations will occupy Hungary only to the extent as necessitated by the war against Germany.

Such a declaration made by the three principal Allied powers with a stress of supreme urgency, may have considerable influence on Hungary's decision. In the past, assurances of this character have been given by the Government of the Soviet Union to Rumania and Finland. In this critical hour a lead given to Hungary may have the effect of inducing her to take the vital decision for the purpose of serving both the cause of the United Nations and of the Hungarian Nation.

The Hungarian Council in Great Britain would highly appreciate if the Governments of His Britannic Majesty, the Soviet Union and the United States of America would give their benevolent consideration to this suggestion inspired by the ardent desire to see Hungary at the earliest possible moment fighting at the side of the United Naitons.

Believe us, Your Excellency,

PRO F.O. 371/39250/C 11855

Anthony Eden to Michael Károlyi

September 1944, London

Dear Count Károlyi,

Thank you for your letter of the 4th September about your proposal, which you had also submitted to the Soviet and United States Governments, for a joint Allied declaration designed to encourage Hungary to cease her participation in the war on the side of the Germans.

I have given careful consideration to your proposal but have decided that, so far as His Majesty's Government are concerned, no useful purpose would be served by pursuing it at the present time.

Yours sincerely,

PRO F.O. 371/39250/C 11855

George Orwell to Countess Károlyi

16 October, 1944, London

Dear Countess Károlyi,

We should like it very much if you would become one of our regular reviewers. It would in all probability mean doing

an article once every two or three months, but not in regular rotation. I will explain what it is that we want to do.

We feel that the practice of giving shortish reviews to a large number of books each week is unsatisfactory, and we intend to have each week a leading review of anything up to 1500 words, dealing with some current book which for one reason or another deserves serious criticism. With this much space to dispose of one can not only give a full criticism of the book in hand but make one's article a worth-while piece of writing in itself. The reason why we cannot keep to a regular rotation is that we must send each book to the reviewer who seems most suitable. We should be able to give about a forthnight's notice. The fee for these articles will be 3 guineas.

A stamped addressed envelope is enclosed. I should be obliged if you could let me know as early as possible whether you are interested in this.

Yours truly,

PIL. 704.f. 80 ö.e.

George Orwell to Countess Károlyi

23 October, 1944, London

Dear Countess Károlyi,

Many thanks for your letter. I find it a bit hard to make appointments because my time is rather full. Could you perhaps have lunch with me on the 3rd November (Friday)? If so, perhaps we could arrange a time etc.

I will explain further about the reviews. They will be very irregular as I shall have to send the books out to whoever seems suitable for that particular subject, and it might be several months before I actually send you a book. I thought you might do books on Central Europe or on French literature. I liked the ones you did in "Horizon" on de Montherlant and on Koestler's "Darkness at Noon". I assume that you would continue writing as Catherine Andrassy?

Yours sincerely,

PIL. 704.f.80 ö.e.

At the time Orwell edited the weekly *Tribune*. As a militant feminist, Countess Károlyi panned Montherlant's *Les filles*. She mentioned Koestler with approval.

László Moholy Nagy to Michael Károlyi

28 February 1945, Chicago

Dear Mr President:

I am sure you must have been disappointed because we have not been keeping a more thorough contact with you by mail, as you justly expected we should. The difficulty is, however, that we are not professional politicians, whose entire time is given for that purpose. Organizing conferences and mass meetings in our spare time is the maximum that we can do, and at least we have a good conscience that we have worked with our best abilities for that.

You may know the confidence of my friends here in Chicago made me chairman of the group and after long hesitation I accepted this position, as not belonging to any party, I thought I would be able to act as a mediator. I think that my belief was justified. In these few years I have been able to reduce the animosity and mistrust of one group to another, though I do not believe that I should overestimate this. The process is slow.

You have most probably received messages about the Conference of the National Directors of the Hungarian-American Democratic Council and about the unity relief action. There is apparently a great desire among the Hungarian groups for a unity move, but the development is rather slow because of the essential differences in the political views of the different sections, particularly in the estimation of social and economic problems.

In fact there was some dissenting opinion about the proposition to sit down at one table with formerly outspoken Horthy supporters, such as Eördögh etc., even if it is in behalf of such a splendid cause as the Hungarian relief. My attitude was to give the opposition opportunity to air their views and that we must evaluate them as the possible future leadership if the collaboration will turn out to be a mistake. In this way we achieved some harmony. The overwhelming majority approved the attempts for the relief coalition which I feel will be pursued from now on by many, especially by our New York friends, in other ways, too. I would like to know how you see the situation yourself. Will such a collaboration strengthen or weaken your efforts in keeping good friendship with the neighbors of Hungary?

You may be assured that the people with whom I work in Chicago have the greatest admiration for you and for your work toward a democratic Hungary. Seeing that your program is accepted by the provisional government of Hungary, we all hope that their efforts will be fortified with your presence there. Our group voted to send to you $100.00. However, we cancelled the order as we hear with pleasure that your position is sufficiently consolidated now and that you have no immediate need for financial help from this country. Can we take this as a sign that your leadership has been officially recognized?

The other day one of my English friends sent me Pálóczy's book on Hungary. Though I have not had time yet to read the book, I read your introduction and was deeply touched. It is a historic document!

Please convey our best wishes to your wife and associates and accept our heartiest greetings yourself.

Yours very sincerely,

PIL 704. f. 81. ö.e.

Michael Károlyi to Walter Citrine

February 1945, London

On behalf of the Hungarian Council in Gt. Britain I request you to propose to World Trade Union Conference to extend invitation to Trade Union Movement in liberated Hungary. Free Trade Unions in Hungary with 300,000 members have been the most determined fighters against Germans and reactionary regime. The Hungarian Council will be glad to give any information required.

PIL 704. f. 129. ö.e.

Walter Citrine to Michael Károlyi

February 1945, London

Dear Sir

With reference to your telegram received this morning, you will probably have observed from the newsapers this morning that an invitation has been extended to the Trade Unions in Hungary.

Yours faithfully

Walter Citrine

General Secretary

PIL 704. f. 81. ö.e.

Michael Károlyi to Winston Churchill

12 May 1945, London

I should like as one who has enjoyed the hospitality of this country for six years to express my deeply felt congratulations to the British people and to you their inspired leader at this hour of magnificent victory. I witnessed and I will always remember the heroism of the people of London. The victory of the British people and of their allies is a victory of progressively minded Hungary as well.

Count Michael Károlyi, member of Provisional Hungarian National Assembly.

PRO FO 371/48492

The Secretary of Anthony Eden to Michael Károlyi

18 May 1945, London

Sir,

I am directed by Mr Secretary Eden to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your kind message of goodwill and congratulation on the great victory and on the end of the long period of trial which you have shared with us in this country.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant

PIL 704. f. 81. ö.e.

Oszkár Jászi and Rusztem Vámbéry to Michael Károlyi

5 September, 1945, New York

Persecution of Hungarian minority in Slovakia alarms us. Hungarian irredentism will make of it second Trianon. Please contact ministers Masaryk and Fierlinger to convince them also on our behalf that revision of policy desirable. Otherwise Hungarian democracy may become enemy of Republic. Inform also Mr Bevin of international dangers of situation.

PIL 704. f. 81. ö.e.

Michael Károlyi to Oszkár Jászi and Rusztem Vámbéry

8 September 1945, London

Have previously written Masaryk, Ripka, Fierlinger according your intentions. Hungarian official invitation arrived. Return depends solving technical difficulties. Did you receive yours. When are you going.

PIL 704. f. 81. ö.e.

A.J.P. Taylor to Countess Károlyi

13th November, 1945
Magdalen College, Oxford

Dearest Catherine,

You are not neglected at all. I was waiting to hear from you. I can't come to Farnham, my family concerns are too much at the moment. Margaret had a daughter, Sophie, last Friday. But I'd always be glad to see Michael.

However I can advise him as well at a distance. I've always told him to hold back and make the people in Hungary invite him: but if he is invited as President he must return. The democratic cause in Hungary won't win from British backing: it will only win in its own strength. There is no chance of British backing: the most Michael can hope for is a repudiation of Bethlen & Co. by Bevin. Even so this repudiation won't mean much as the Foreign Office takes little notice of its official chief. Nor must Michael go as anti-Russian—the Russians have behaved very well in Hungary and it is a godsend that they and not we or the Americans liberated it. Michael must return not for the sake of Britain or of Russia but for the sake of Hungarian democracy: it is the second chance, even more difficult than in 1918 & even more likely to fail—but it must be taken. I agree he should have some Labour MP who will ask questions about him in the House. Why not John Haire MP who has just returned from Budapest?

I can do nothing about the Czechs, particularly as I have always advocated the expulsion of all Hungarians & Germans from Czechoslovak territory. Like Weimar Germany, new Hungary must realize she has lost the war & did nothing to help the allies until Germany was defeated. This is a hard doctrine, but there is no escaping it. I hope to go to Czechoslovakia at Christmas & I'm quite prepared to take any mes-

sage on programme Michael likes to send. In this way I might be of some little help.

But the great thing is to be ready to stand on his own feet and not to rely in help from here.

Best wishes—I wish I could come over, but it's impossible. I've written to Ellen Wilkinson to see if she can arrange anything with Bevin. Of course Michael must not go back unless offered the position of President—it is still true that the longer he holds out the better, so long as it is not for anti-Russian or for British reasons.

Get well soon. Love, Alan.

PIL. 704. f. 81. ö.e.

George Orwell to Countess Károlyi

27B Canonbury Square
Islington, London, N.I
CAN 3751
7th January, 1946.

Dear Countess Carolyi [sic],

Many thanks for your two letters dated 30th December and 5th January, also for the article on Hungary. I will see that the latter gets to "Tribune", but in the light of your second letter I will go through it first to make sure that there is nothing to show where it comes from.

I am sorry "Tribune" have not sent you any more books to review. You perhaps don't know that I stopped being Literary Editor about ten months ago. I still write regularly for them, but I don't have any say in the handing out of books. The present Literary Editor is T.R. Fyvel, whose writings you may perhaps know. I don't suppose he knows that Countess Carolyi and Catherine Andrassy are the same person, but I will give him your name and show him those articles you did in "Horizon". I will also give you the opinion you ask for on the article before I pass it on to "Tribune". I shall be at home if you ring at the time named on Tuesday morning. My telephone number is Canonbury 3751.

Yours sincerely,
George Orwell

PIL 704. f. 82. ö.e.

Michael Károlyi to Ellen Wilkinson

Ewshott, 1946 January 14

Dear Ellen Wilkinson,

May I approach you on a matter of a most urgent appeal which has just reached me from Hungary? I enclose the text of a wire signed by Vilmos Böhm, former Minister of War in my cabinet (1918) and a leading member of the Socialdemocratic Party of Hungary. Böhm has recently returned to his native country after 26 years of exile. I understand he has been appointed Hungarian Minister in Stockholm.

As one of those who have fought Hungarian feudal reaction for over a quarter of a century, I feel I must not hesitate to voice the sufferings of the Hungarian people and to convey to you the cry for help of the young Hungarian democracy. Böhm's report of the terrible plight of my country is borne out by other reliable reports which reached me from various sources.

I deem it my duty to call the attention of the world but first of all of the British public to the Hungarian tragedy, before my return to Budapest in the near future.

Weakened and disorganized by famine and pestilence the forces of Hungarian democracy might once again be overwhelmed by the virulent nationalism and reactionary chauvinism which is the real enemy of peace.

The people of Hungary, clothed in rags, shivering with cold, and with empty stomachs are working in the mines, factories and the fields to rescue the economy of the country. It is a terrible thought that

their heroic struggle to overcome the devastation caused by fascism and make democracy work should be in vain. But it is not humanly possible to endure for long the strain of barefooted work at the coal-face, overtime in the clearing of ruins, when the home is decimated by epidemics and child mortality reaches a ghastly peak.

The chief need is for food, clothing and medicine. Hungary has been utterly despoiled by the retreating Germans and their fascist allies. The means at the disposal of the Russians are not inexhaustible and are drained away in many directions. Without direct help from the West Hungarian democracy is in peril of disorganization. I appeal to you not only as to a true friend of democracy but also of humanist thought and ideals to succour my suffering countrymen who are innocent of the unparalleled crimes of ruling cliques against mankind. May I pass on a word of hope and encouragement to the people of Hungary. Such a message will brace the courage to endure until the immediately needed help arrives.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

PIL 704. f 130. ö.e.

F. Thornton to Countess Károlyi

London, 1946 April 1.

Madam,

With reference to your letter of the 24th ultimo regarding the proposed export to the Hungarian Red Cross of certain drugs controlled by the Dangerous Drugs Acts, I am directed by the Secretary of State to say that he hereby conveys formal authority for the passing of the order in question to Messrs. Savory and Moore Ltd., Standard Works, Lawrence Road, Tottenham. N. 15., for execution.

I am to say that the firm in question must apply for the necessary export licence under the Dangerous Acts, and must undertake to pack and export the drugs in question

I am, Madam,

Your obedient Servant

PIL 704. f. 82. ö.e.

Géza Jeszenszky

The Genesis of a Lasting Quarrel in Central Europe

Ignác Romsics: *The Dismantling of Historic Hungary: the Peace Treaty of Trianon, 1920.* Translated by Mario D. Fenyo.
New York, Columbia University Press, 2002, 201 pp.

Compared to other trouble spots, Central Europe today is a tranquil place, nevertheless we should keep in mind that both world wars broke out here and were caused partly by the national aspirations and border disputes so typical of this region. More than 80 years ago a peace settlement tried to reorganise Central Europe along ethnic lines, but that caused more problems than it solved. Bálint Vázsonyi, the recently deceased concert pianist and political writer (the great-nephew of Vilmos Vázsonyi, the first Hungarian cabinet minister who was a practising member of the Jewish community) wrote an essay about the 1920 Hungarian Peace Treaty, calling it a "bad treaty that won't go away."[1] Indeed, that is the problem with that old piece of international law, and that explains the appearance of another book (following scores of earlier publications) on the subject.

Though even the average well-educated person is unaware of it, most readers of this journal are aware that the Hungarians, a nation looking back to eleven centuries in Central Europe, received a devastating and unjustified blow in the aftermath of the First World War. Ignoring President Wilson's principle of self-determination, the victors partitioned the historic Kingdom of Hungary by arbitrarily assigning 3.5 million ethnic Hungarians, a third of the nation, and two-thirds of the country's total territory to the newly-created or enlarged states of Czechoslovakia, Romania and "The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes." Ignác Romsics, a highly acclaimed and prolific Hungarian historian, a frequent contributor to these pages, in a rather short and therefore easily digestible book recapitulates the process that led to that uniquely unfair yet lasting settlement, which has many unfortunate repercussions even today.

By now practically every document pertaining to the making of this treaty has been studied by professional historians, there is a vast literature both on the narrow subject and on its larger background, nevertheless the book can be recommended to all those interested in Central

1 ■ *The Washington Times*, June 4, 2000.

Géza Jeszenszky
is a historian specialising in Hungary's relations with the English-speaking world. He was Foreign Minister between 1990–94 and Ambassador to the United States, 1998–2002.

Europe. Romsics begins with a description of the national tensions in the ethnic mosaic of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, and tells of the dreams concerning its future of Pan-Slavists, the die-hard Habsburg centralists, nationalists of various colour and degree, and idealist intellectuals on the Left and Right. It is vain to ask whether the Empire had any chance for survival, but in view of the fact that Winston Churchill proved right, independence indeed brought terrible sufferings to its inhabitants and their descendants (Bosnians included!),[2] an attempt to give an answer is justified. Romsics's answer is a cautious "no":

> the empire was subjected to centrifugal forces propelled by nationalism which neither the Austrian nor the Hungarian leadership could counteract effectively. It cannot be ascertained that the federal solution, advocated by many of the contemporaries, would have been an effective counteraction (p. 18.)

The present writer, who has devoted much study and thought to the subject, is of a somewhat more positive opinion: the First World War was not inevitable, and without that, if reasonable politicians in Hungary (like Prime Minister Tisza) would have prevailed over the Radical Right and the Radical Left, the dualist structure might have given way to federalism in both halves of the Empire, meeting many of the legitimate demands of the national minorities.

The chapter on war aims reveals the strength and depth of the forces that were bent on destroying the Empire and replacing it with new states based on one dominant language or another. These forces were external rather than internal: French plans for a post-war Europe dominated by France, helped by a group of client states in the back of Germany, and Russian plans of creating a large sphere of influence in central and southeastern Europe. The mini-imperialism of the Czechs, Romanians and Serbs fitted well into the aims of both Great Powers. The book shows that it was not easy to overcome the reluctance of the British (and later that of the Americans) to embark upon such a drastic change in the power structure (today we would say "security architecture") of Europe, but the Russian revolution and the failure of a separate peace with Austria followed by the latter's total subordination to Germany led to the decisions made in late Spring, 1918, to embrace the programme of the exiled politicians (the Czech Masaryk and Beneš, the Polish Zaleski, the Croat Supilo, the Slovak Stefanik, etc.) and their British and French friends (R.W. Seton-Watson, W. Steed, L. Leger, E. Denis). Romsics raises the issue of how much support this programme enjoyed among the respective populations. Taking the number of deserters and POWs ready to enter the volunteer Czech, Romanian etc. legions organised by the Entente, he concludes that a considerable, perhaps an overwhelming part of the so-called "subject peoples" of the Monarchy welcomed the chance for independence. I do not question that, but one must also add the influence of war weariness, the possibility to escape from POW camps, and mainly the wish to be on the winning rather than on the losing side and receiving generous frontiers, which nobody had dreamed of. But, granted that *caveat,* one can only agree with the author that

2 ■ "There is not one of the peoples or provinces that constituted the Empire of the Habsburgs to whom gaining their independence has not brought the tortures which ancient poets and theologians had reserved for the dammed." Sir Winston Churchill, *The Gathering Storm* (London, 1948), 14.

> the decisions of the Great Powers would not have taken the direction they did had the Austro-Hungarian Empire not been multinational, or if the leaders of the nationalities had declared in favour of preserving the Monarchy and Hungary, as the Czechs and the Croatians had done in 1848-49 (p. 51.)

Important as the decisions made in the Allied capitals and War Councils, later at the Paris Peace Conference, were the new borders were settled basically on the spot by the French-led Serbian, Romanian and Czechoslovak armies, which by the end of 1918 occupied almost all the territories demanded. For Hungarians the debate that will never end is whether it would have been possible to resist those armies and thus to prevent the occupation and subsequent cession of territories where about 3,5 million ethnic Hungarians lived who refused to become citizens of the newly created Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia or of the greatly enlarged Romania. The answer hinges on how one assesses the personality and policies of Count Mihály Károlyi, the pro-Entente new leader of Hungary and his Radical and Social Democratic allies. Romsics describes the illusions, the hesitations and the actual decisions of the revolutionary government, also the anarchy caused by the soldiers infected with the promises of the Bolsheviks, but refrains from coming to any judgement. Perhaps he deliberately left that to Horace Rumbold, the British Minister [not Ambassador, as stated] to Berne, who, speaking about a certain step of Károlyi, wrote that it "is so naïve as to strengthen the impression that Count Károlyi is not really fitted for the role he has assumed." (p. 60) Romsics gives a realistic picture of the weakness of the Hungarian armed forces and the reluctance of the population to continue the war. He should have given reasons for the contrast between the defeatist mood in Budapest and the aggressive optimism of the Czechs, Southern Slavs and Romanians.

The reader can follow how the new borders were drawn up: in principle during the discussions of the Supreme Council (composed by the Heads of Delegations and the Foreign Ministers of the five Great Powers), and in practice by the junior diplomats who made up the territorial committees. The pattern was typical: the American experts proposed frontiers as close to the ethnic lines as possible (where it was possible to draw such a line), the British were wavering between a sense of fairness and the drive to punish the vanquished and reward the smaller allies, the Italians generally inconsistent except where their *"sacro egoismo"* was involved, while the French gave all possible support to the often extravagant claims of the emerging successor states. The most important argument for the latter was military and economic strategy, particularly the existence of railway lines in the most disputed areas. Eventually that decided the fate of close to two million Hungarians, who were separated from the compact bloc of Hungarians, despite their protests against the denial of the principle of self-determination. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that the most outrageous claims, like the creation of a "Corridor" in Western Hungary between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, the incorporation of the Börzsöny, Mátra and Bükk hills into Czechoslovakia, or the cession of Baja and Pécs to Yugoslavia, were turned down by the Great Powers, despite the many false figures presented to the Conference by the Czech Kramař and Beneš or by the Romanian Prime Minister, Ion[el] Brătianu. Romsics reiterates the view held by most modern historians (as opposed to the traditional belief in inter-war Hungary) that

the proclamation of a Hungarian Soviet Republic on March 21, 1919 and its subsequent policies did not influence the territorial decisions of the Peace Conference. The evidence for that is only circumstantial. In fact it looks quite probable that on a few debated points, like the fate of the *Csallóköz* (the large Hungarian-inhabited island of the Danube), that of the Baranya Triangle, the *Muraköz,* and the village of Ligetfalu on the right bank of the Danube facing Pozsony/Bratislava, "the danger of Bolshevism" and the conduct of the the Hungarian Bolshevik leadership did influence the verdict taken against Hungary. The decision to accept the Austrian claim to a strip of Western Hungary (eventually known as the *Burgenland*) had undoubtedly much to do with Bolshevism having captured Hungary. (The Austrians supported their claim, made on ethnic grounds, with the need to stop the spreading of Bolshevism.)

Foreign, particularly British, influence on the fate of Hungary did not stop with the drawing up of the new borders. Following the collapse of Béla Kun's Bolshevik regime, and during the weeks of Romanian occupation, there were chaotic conditions in the country, unbridled plunder by the Romanian army, self-proclaimed but powerless governments in Budapest, and the Red Terror replaced by White terror in the countryside occupied by the small "National" army led by Admiral Horthy. Sir George Clerk, a British diplomat, played a major role in consolidating conditions and installing a widely representative government. That opened the way to inviting a Hungarian delegation to Paris to be presented with the terms of peace. In Budapest expectations ran high, and the documentation prepared by a highly capable staff under the future Prime Minister Count Pál Teleki was indeed impressive. In Paris, however, few cared to study it and it did not influence the terms in any way. Despite the eloquence of Count Apponyi, the Head of the Hungarian delegation that arrived in Paris on 7 January, 1920, and the many notes, the terms presented by the victors were as harsh as agreed almost a year earlier. The Hungarian call for plebiscites on the territories to be detached was of no avail, and for good reasons. In addition to the 3,5 million Hungarians, a good many non-Hungarians (Germans, Slovaks, even some Romanians and Serbs) would have most likely voted against being torn off from Hungary, severing traditional economic connections. The only person who paid attention to the Hungarian arguments was Lloyd George, the British Liberal Prime Minister. He spoke out against so many Hungarians being detached from their country and proposed the revision of the borders planned, but his subordinates foiled the only serious attempt to mitigate the terms to be imposed upon Hungary. A few weeks later a new French team at the Quai d'Orsay, headed by Maurice Paléologue, in combination with some French business circles, played with the idea of revising the Hungarian borders after the signing of treaty, provided Hungary were ready to join the client states of France and were willing to give France a paramount influence over the Hungarian economy. Nothing came out of this scheme, so Hungary had no alternative but signing the treaty, probably the most unfair one in modern history, on 4 June at the Grand Trianon Palace at Versailles.

The Hungarians had their last hope in providing military help to the Polish Army fighting the Red Army near Warsaw, and, in exchange, to receive back some Hungarian-inhabited areas from Romania. Britain and France, however, turned the offer down on July 27–28. The formation of an alliance between Yugoslavia, Czecho-

slovakia and Romania, known as the Little Entente, made any Hungarian plan for border change practically hopeless, at least as long as there was no Great Power to support the revision of the territorial clauses of the Treaty. Hungary had no alternative but to ratify the Treaty in November, 1920. Soon the victors also ratified it. The fact that it was only passed after extensive debates in the British Parliament, against a large number of votes in both Houses, and that in France 74 members also voted "no" (against 478 "yes") is telling. It shows that many European politicians thought that the treatment of Hungary was clearly unjust and did not serve the cause of peace. Nevertheless, when the commissions charged with the delineation of the actual border on the spot recommended minor rectifications in favour of Hungary, the Conference of Ambassadors and the League of Nations turned most of them down. The only alteration in favour of Hungary, awarding the town of Sopron and its vicinity to Hungary, after a plebiscite held on 13 December 1921, was due to the military action of Hungarian irregulars, whose resistance induced the Allies to opt for the compromise of asking the people for their preference.

For those who do not have the time to read even this short, concise book but nevertheless want to understand why Central Europe is still full of ethnic tensions, the Epilogue (with telling tables) and the maps provide ample explanation. All the national problems of the old Habsburg Empire survived, in an aggravated form. The ill-treatment of national minorities provided an inviting pretext for intervention to Hitler, border change and war. Romsics ends the story here, more exactly with the restoration of the Trianon borders in the 1947 Treaty of Paris. But there is a sad follow-up, which shows that the legacy of the 1920 treaty continues to poison the political air in the successor states of historic Hungary.

Despite or because of decades of mistreatment, the Hungarians torn from Hungary (and their descendants) have never ceased to regard themselves as part of the Hungarian nation. The imposition of Communism following the Second World War worsened their lot considerably. Close to half a million were expelled from Czechoslovakia and Romania to the rump state of Hungary. Those who were allowed to remain in the land of their ancestors faced the expropriation of their properties and the banning of their schools and associations. They suffered under double oppression: while everyone suffered under the iron hand of dictatorship, anti-minority policies and practices added to the plight of the Hungarians, who could not even protest as all political expression was stifled. Improvements have been painfully slow even after the fall of the Communist regimes. For example, only a fraction of the Hungarian communal or private assets has been restored to the previous owners since 1989. Even today the Hungarians in the seven neighbouring countries around Hungary feel that their very existence is in jeopardy. The policy of uprooting, expelling, discriminating, and occasionally outright killing, combined with "socialist industrialisation" and deliberate colonisation (transfering a large number of non-Hungarians to territories traditionally inhabited mainly by Hungarians and thus changing the ethnic composition of the area), has considerably reduced the number and, to a larger extent, the proportion of the Hungarian minorities in all the states neighbouring Hungary. Since 1910 the number of ethnic Hungarians in the areas detached from Hungary has declined from 3.3 million to 2.6 million. Their proportion has drastically fallen from 30 to 11 percent of the population in Slovakia; from

32 to 20 percent in Romanian Transylvania; from 28 to 16 percent in Vojvodina (Serbia); and from 31 to 12 percent in Subcarpathia (Ukraine). The ethnic composition of the cities has changed even more dramatically, as graphically demonstrated by the case of the capital of Transylvania, Kolozsvár. In 1910, 82 per cent of the city's population was Hungarian and 14 per cent Romanian. Today it is called Cluj-Napoca, where—due to the relocations and other methods of deposed dictator Ceauşescu and the notorious present-day mayor Funar— Hungarians comprise only 18 percent of the population.

These figures reveal a sophisticated form of ethnic cleansing. The aim, policies and tendencies of intolerant majority elites inevitably generate constant tension and conflict. There has been, however, an unforeseen but fortunate result of the partition of the Hungarian nation into eight units. Hungarians beyond the borders are strong adherents of the Euro-Atlantic orientation of their countries and substantially contribute to the stability of their own country and of the whole region. They have never resorted to violence; they struggle for their civil rights, indeed for their survival, solely by political means. They deserve recognition and support not only for moral but also for practical reasons.

The problems arising out of the Trianon Treaty are not unique to Hungary. The ill-treatment of national minorities is a world-wide phenomenon. The principles, the model and the framework for solving the problem are at hand and easily accomplished given a little good will and considerable foresight. In the western half of Europe, decentralisation, devolution, local democracy and territorial autonomy are everyday practices. A report drawn up by Andreas Gross, a Swiss parliamentarian, and passed by the Assembly of the Council of Europe on July 24, 2003, points out that

> most present-day conflicts no longer occur between states but within states... Autonomy allows a group which is a minority within a state to exercise its rights, while providing certain guarantees of the state's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In the interests of stability and fairness the various European institutions should urge every state, including Hungary's neighbours, to end all forms of discrimination against their national minorities. If that does not happen, there will be endless tension between the majority nation and the national minority, and also with the kin state of the minority. It is in the interest of all the states of Europe, and it is a special responsibility of the powers that drew up the peace treaty signed in 1920 at Trianon, including the United States, to ensure that the Hungarian minorities will at last be able to breathe freely and feel they have a future in their native land, where their forebears have lived for well over a millennium. ❧

Hugh Carless

Lunch at the Residence

Recollections of Diplomatic Life in Budapest, 1963–1966

In the summer of 1963 when we arrived in Budapest, the Cold War divided Europe. Our diplomatic mission there was still a British Legation. It was only in December 1963, five or six months later, that it was upgraded to Embassy status. From 1947–63, the Legation had had its offices, as the Embassy does today, in a handsome, five-storey corner building at Harmincad utca 6 near Vörösmarty Square in Pest. It had been built before the first World War as the headquarters of the Hazai Bank, the National Savings Bank. Possessing the bulk and solidity of a minor fortress, it afforded ample space for all departments of the mission which then included a relatively large visa section and, on the ground floor, a cultural section with its library and cinema. We even had room for our own kindergarten.

During the siege of Budapest in the winter of 1944-45, the bank had witnessed dramatic episodes. Part of the building had been given over to a section of the Swedish Legation under the diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, "the man who disappeared". He had harboured a number of Hungarians in the bank, mainly Hungarian Jews whom he was trying to help leave Budapest. Then, during the 1956 revolution, the British Legation had for several weeks sheltered some eighty souls: British and Hungarian members of its staff together with a group of British journalists. So, the building already had a history.

At the Legation, I was First Secretary and Number Two. With me were my wife Rosa Maria, our three-year-old son Ronald and Maria, a Spanish *au pair* girl. We moved straight into a house on Szirtes utca half way up Gellért Hill, which had a fine view looking down over the Vár and the Mátyás Templom where our second son Roger was to be christened in 1964.

We had reached Budapest seven years after the Hungarian revolution which, according to a local witticism, had been the time when the Hungarians behaved

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Hugh Carless
was First Secretary at the British Legation (after December 1963, Embassy) in Budapest between 1963–66.

like Poles, that is with reckless bravery; the Poles behaved like Hungarians, sitting on the fence, and the Czechs, well, they behaved like Czechs. Although the revolution had been suppressed, it seemed to have gained for the Hungarians a somewhat greater degree of cultural choice than that granted to people in other Soviet bloc countries. At the time, another epigram claimed that Hungary was the best hut in the barracks, the barracks of Eastern Europe. One freedom which Hungary may have enjoyed relatively more than other bloc countries was that there was more scope for cultural exchanges with the West. We British certainly regarded our cultural programme as valid and rewarding. On our side it was, from 1963 onwards, organised by the British Council.

Some of the people and events which formed part of this programme remain vividly in mind. Among our quota of inward visitors were men like the composer Benjamin Britten, the positivist philosopher A.J. Ayer, Graham Storey, the editor of the letters of Charles Dickens and Rayner Unwin, the publisher. Such visitors would generally find time to give an evening lecture on the ground floor of the Embassy in what had been the Hazai Bank's public banking parlour. Admission was both by invitatiton and at the door.

As for our major cultural events, the public were immensely receptive. On occasions like the concerts given by the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Colin Davies, there was wild enthusiasm. And a visit from the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1964 was a blockbuster. Directed by Peter Brook, they played the sombre *King Lear* and a light-hearted *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Paul Scofield acted Lear and his daughters were Irene Worth, Diana Rigg and Julie Christie, all of whom became illustrious stars of the stage and screen. The impact of such performances on audiences, who for years had been starved of contact with the wider world, was immeasurable.

In 1964, these cultural exchanges were reinforced with the first visit to Hungary by a British Cabinet minister. This was Anthony Crosland, the then Secretary of State for Education who later became Foreign Secretary from 1976–77. He was impressive both personally and intellectually, having already won a world reputation for his *The Future of Socialism* (1956) which had advocated socialism with a human face. He and Susan, his attractive American-born wife, made a striking couple.

The ambassador gave a lunch at his residence in honour of the Croslands. Hungarian ministers attended and among the guests was Iván Boldizsár, the then editor of the well produced *The New Hungarian Quarterly*. Emboldened by a lull in the conversation, Boldizsár leaned across the table and asked:

"Tell me Mr Crosland, which English newspapers do you prefer to read?"

"Never read any of them", replied Crosland.

"Oh come, Mr Crosland, surely you read the weeklies, *Tribune* and the *New Statesman*".

"Never read them, and I never read them because I know more than the people who write them".

Then realising how arrogant he must have sounded, he added: "But my wife has strict instruction to read all the papers and, if she finds anything nice about me, she is to show it to me and, if there is anything unpleasant, she is to conceal it".

Everyone laughed with him.

But life was not all lunches and laughter. The Cold War was at a peak and Hungary had, of course, become a People's Republic in 1949. Considerations of security were a part of our everyday life. The secret police seemed omnipresent, and we knew that the Hungarian staff at the embassy, as well as the domestics, provided for foreign diplomats by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, had to report to the police.

As number two in the embassy, security was my main preoccupation. Some of the Hungarian staff, after they had been to the secret police, would come and tell me what the police had asked them.

As for the British staff, we had a regulation that, whenever anyone encountered a Hungarian outside their normal line of duty, they must make a written report and submit it to the head of their section. Among us, there were several fine looking girls; and one of them failed to submit such a report. She was then posted away from the embassy. Several months later, we were taken aback to receive a sharply worded letter from the Security Department in the Foreign Office who complained that we had been responsible for having allowed a serious breach of security to occur.

At her next post, the girl had been obliged to confess that she had had an affair with a young Hungarian. Who knew who he might really have been? When I read that letter, I remember asking myself whether it was my fault, or the ambassador's fault, the section heads' fault or all our fault? In fact, the embassy was a close knit and, on the whole, happy family, particularly under our second ambassador, Sir Alexander Morley, and his Viennese-born wife, Heidi.

Throughout our time, security problems loomed large and caused several critical incidents. On one occasion, the Foreign Office requested the Hungarian ambassador in London to withdraw an attaché whose actions had been judged incompatible with his status as a diplomat. Two days later, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared our Third Secretary *persona non grata.* There could hardly have been anyone less like a spy than Peter Fowler, who, I am glad to record, survived the indignity and went on to become a successful ambassador.

Some of our Hungarian staff were of high quality. We were fortunate to have István Gál as our cultural adviser. He possessed an encyclopaedic knowledge of Hungarian history which he was always willing to share both with us and with British visitors. He and his wife Júlia became our dear friends and were instrumental in introducing us to a cross section of leading cultural figures. Among them, for example, were Tibor Déry the writer, Miklós Borsos the sculptor and Zoltán Kodály the composer.

Gál had made his acquaintance with Britain at an early age. As a Boy Scout, he had attended the Third Jamboree of the movement held in 1929 when some 50,000 Scouts had camped at Arrow Park near Liverpool. He must then have formed the favourable impression of Britain, which he always maintained. He had also attended the fourth Jamboree, which was held in 1933 at Gödöllő, near Budapest, under the symbol of the White Stag of Hungary.

Our deepest recollections of our three years in Hungary are of the resilience of the people. Some had suffered under Fascism and many others under Communism. We met several who had endured dreadful tribulations yet had emerged from their ordeals with an apparently heightened sense of humanity and tolerance. One was a woman who had been arrested as a young social democrat and transported not to a camp in Hungary but, evidently by chance, to camps of the Gulag Archipelago. She emerged after a dozen or so years under an amnesty decreed by Khrushchev and, on return to Budapest, was given a job in a publishing house. Her holidays she then spent in the Soviet Union, visiting fellow former political prisoners and reading *Samizdat* through the nights.

Count Zsigmond Széchenyi had been a fine shot and a well-known big game hunter, who became a writer by necessity. He had insisted on staying in his own country through thick and thin although he was declared "a member of the former ruling classes" and, thus, pushed down to the bottom of the heap when accounts of shooting tigers in India and lion and buffalo in Africa were extremely popular before the war. Being non-political, his books could be published again and they sold like hot cakes. One evening in early spring, we drove out to the woods in Transdanubia just when, as he had promised, the violets had begun to flower in order to watch the woodcock flighting on their migration northwards.

Despite the reality of the Cold War, and the many dangers, restrictions and shortages which it imposed, a sense of humour often lightened serious considerations and political jokes came thick and fast. For instance, when Krushchev visited Hungary, everyone knew that he had been going on a lot about the need to boost socialist agriculture and the importance of chicken farming and maize production. The Hungarian Government therefore decided that he should visit their most up to date chicken farms. When he arrived at the first farm, he demanded:

"Manager, what do you feed your chickens on?"

"Comrade Chairman, we feed them on our best Hungarian maize."

"You blockhead, don't you realise maize should be reserved for human consumption".

Krushchev proceeded to the second farm by which time the manager of the first farm had phoned warning his colleague against maize.

"Comrade Chairman, here we feed the chickens on good quality rye".

"Idiot, you should be dismissed".

At the third farm, by the time Krushchev had arrived, the managers of both farms had phoned their colleague.

"Manager" demanded Krushchev.

"Yes, Comrade Chairman, on this farm we just give the chickens a few kopeks and tell them to scratch about for themselves".

On a more flippant occasion, a sparkling creature asked me a riddle: explain the difference between an Englishman and a Hungarian. Answer: in England, when you are introduced to an Englishman, it is impolite to question him closely about his political views, his income or his sex life. In Hungary, however, it is considered impolite and lacking in feeling if you do not immediately ask a new acquaintance whether or not he is a member of the Party, his salary and the name of his latest mistress.

When we left in 1966, we drove through Austria and down to Venice for a bucket and spade holiday on the beach at the Lido. The boys were then five and two. Ladies would ask my wife:

"Signora, we know you speak Italian, but what language are your children talking?"

It was, of course, Hungarian but, as soon as we arrived back in Britain, they immediately switched to the local dialect which happened to be Glaswegian. We had been sent on a sabbatical year at Glasgow University where I was to be a lecturer in the Department of Politics. ❧

Miklós Györffy

An Age of Unborn Children

Imre Kertész: *Felszámolás* (Liquidation). Magvető, Budapest, 2003, 160 pp.
Endre Kukorelly: *TündérVölgy avagy Az emberi szív rejtelmeiről* (Fairy Valley or On the Mysteries of the Human Heart). Kalligram Könyvkiadó, Pozsony (Bratislava), 2003, 371 pp.

One year after receiving the Nobel Prize, Imre Kertész has published his fourth novel *Felszámolás* (Liquidation). His first three *(Fatelessness, The Failure,* and *Kaddish for an Unborn Child)* are closely interconnected and are often referred to as a trilogy; the new novel is connected to them, and can only be fully understood in the knowledge of those three. The Auschwitz 'story' continues and, as the title implies, comes to an end. The central character, a writer and Auschwitz survivor, liquidates himself and his work after the change of the political system in 1990—he commits suicide and gets his ex-wife to burn the manuscript of his novel. With the fall of the dictatorship, his life as a survivor loses its meaning. "The excuse for my life has gone, the existential mode of survival has ceased," he writes in his suicide note.

> I have to disappear, together with everything I carry within me like the plague. I carry incredibly devastating forces in myself. You could annihilate the entire world with my *ressentiment,* speaking genteely and not of vomit.

The novel has to go too, for the survival biography of a dead man, a "nothingness" has no meaning to be expressed that would be turned into a product for sale "on the literary rag and bone market". "To experience the shame of life and hold one's peace—that is the greatest achievement.

B.'s shame (the central character and narrator in *Kaddish* is also designated by this letter) is that he was born in the death camp, born by accident, as some sort of an operational breakdown. He did not die, he was born there. "He felt that he was born illegally," his ex-wife says, "that he survived for no reason, and his life has no justification, unless he can decipher the code called Auschwitz." He became a writer, an intellectual, in a dictatorship which was another prison, a shameful case of the Auschwitz mode of life that had become universal in the 20th century. He lived in Budapest as though he lived in Auschwitz; true, it was "a domesticated Auschwitz, and he undertook it of his own free will. Still you could just as easily die of it as of the real one." Although B. cannot be identified with the author, Imre Kertész shares many a trait with him, if only because of his connection with *Kaddish.* Looking at it from this aspect, it becomes

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Miklós Györffy
reviews new fiction for this journal.

clearer what Kertész meant when he said, not long ago, that in *Fatelessness* he wrote about the Kádár regime. But if we look at it from Kertész's ontological perspective, there is no fundamental difference between the shame of Auschwitz and the shame of the Kádár regime.

Naturally, B. is not Imre Kertész, and not only because the writer did not commit suicide. True, in a dramatic piece written much in the manner of Thomas Bernhard, B. wrote: " TO STAY ALIVE is the revolt / The great refusal is to live our life to the end." But B. is also not the central narrator figure in *Liquidation* which Gyuri Köves is in the earlier books, the Köves or B. of the *Kaddish.* B. does not even make an appearance in the time plane of the narrative in *Liquidation.* By then he is dead and survives only in the memories and writings of other figures. The narrative begins in 1990, not long after B. committed suicide, and lasts until 1999, when the events are recalled. On this latter time level, and also in the framing story, another major character makes his appearance. He is just as important in *Liquidation* as B. is, and is also a reincarnation of Kertész. Keserű is also a narrator-character in the novel, and has a similarly telling name ("Bitter"), as Köves ("Stony") had. "Let our man, the protagonist of this story, be called Keserű," is the opening sentence of the novel. Keserű is a publisher's editor, who was B.'s colleague once and, to some degree, also his friend. After B.' death, he collects his papers and starts an investigation to find where the last manuscript is. He is convinced that B. would not have committed suicide before completing the novel in which he summarises his life as a survivor.

By 1999, reality for Keserű becomes a state burdened with too many problems; in fact, it ceases to exist. He spends his days gaping at a reality that had gone. He either watches the homeless slowly going about their business on the square outside his window, or reads a play that B. had left after him. Meanwhile he muses on a more splendid past. The comedy entitled *Liquidation* begins. The opening scene portrays Keserű and his fellow editors as they received the news that their publishing house is to be wound up. This also means that there is no chance for B.'s postumus works to be published. At the turn of the century, literature is liquidated. B. predicted it when he was still alive, he knew precisely what was to happen to his writings and friends after he was gone. This is a strange motif in the novel, one that can be interpreted both ironically and seriously. What is at stake, eerily and ominously, when B. commits suicide, becomes clear when he foresees the future in an almost supernatural way.

This section is followed by a long confession by Keserű, told and written in the time dimension of the framing story, but it concerns the past. In it, Keserű tells readers about B., and though apologetically, for it is not what he really wants to speak about, he also recounts the story of his own life, that of a passionate man of letters who at one time, fed up, in a reader's report for a publisher, said what he really thought of a party-line writer. Subsequently he was locked up for ten days; his career was ruined, his marriage broke up, and he was even signed up as an informer. On the periphery of literary life, he got involved in B.'s life and love affairs, and when B. commited suicide, he gains an insight into B.'s secrets and his papers with the help of B.'s last mistress. It was only the manuscript of B.'s last novel, the existence of which he presumed, "using an astronomical method", that he could not find. Suspicion on the part of the investigative editor eventually falls on Judit, B.'s ex-wife, who at one time had been his own mistress too. Judit had since broken with B. and her own pre-

vious life, and was respectably married to a well-to-do architect. Keserű draws her back into her previous life, and learns from her that as a doctor she supplied B. with morphine, and then, as the apotheosis of their marriage, she burnt the manuscript.

We learn all this in the course of an unexpected new personal narrative, when Judit tells her own version to her architect husband. She came to realise she could not begin her life anew and be happy after all she had gone through with B. At his side, she experienced his Jewishness, Auschwitz, and learnt that she could not have a child by him. Later she tried to get rid of the trauma, and when she met her second husband she broke with B. and learnt how to forget. However, the bitter and merciless investigation Keserű conducts awakens the past in her and though she loves her half-Jewish children and their father, she almost turns her back on them. What eventually happens to Judit and her family, and to Keserű, who had completed the investigation, yet lost reality, is kept in suspense in Kertész's novel. The editor, sitting as he does in front of his computer, has to decide on whether making "the next move" or "perhaps not, after all".

Though *Liquidation* is a continuation (and liquidation) of the trilogy, it is also a new work in its own right. Its structure is more complex and, it may well be said, more playful than those of the earlier three. The high degree of abstraction and the use of aphorism, so typical of Kertész, are accompanied by almost (melo)dramatic or tragicomical scenes and the suspense of a thriller. What we read is unambiguously 'literature', on the loss of reality. At the same time, this literature is pathetically powerless and ineffectual when it comes to the loss of a reality that means life. Keserű's failure in his investigations, on one hand, makes for an exciting read and, on the other, is another 'failure' of literature.

Péter Esterházy published his *Harmonia cælestis*, his large-scale family and father novel, in 2000, at the age of fifty. Endre Kukorelly, one year his junior, is two years late. After working on it for nine years, he published his most important work to date in 2003. The *Fairy Valley or On the Mysteries of the Human Heart* is also a family, father, and *Bildung* novel. It may well be that there are no important connections between the two novels, yet on the basis of some external features, it inevitably recalls Esterházy in mind.

This is also large-scale writing, whose sophisticated structure is woven through with a web of motifs. The narrative here is also ironically self-reflexive and relativistic, oscillating between a shyly sentimental lyrical tone and the rhetorical registers of a banal and reduced everyday language. The traditional patterns of the novel are invalidated by the text. Here, too, the novel is autobiographical in inspiration. The narrator-protagonist was born into a family that had seen better days, and his father, or more precisely memories of him, also plays the most important role in his story. Like Esterházy, Kukorelly likes to use quotes, inserted texts and textual interconnections. His work can truly be understood only in relation to two other novels. Although Esterházy's novel could not be among the works 'referred to' in Kukorelly's, because the two were more or less written at the same time, Kukorelly holds to similar aesthetic principles, and he probably cannot refrain from recognising that the *Fairy Valley* is, one way or another, a palimpsest on *Harmonia cælestis* and many other works. It is too early to say whether the two novels are worlds apart, despite all necessary contemporary and literary connections, or if they have connections of a different sort. Literary history will decide in time.

The title of Kukorelly's novel refers to a narrative poem by the 19-century

Romantic poet Mihály Vörösmarty, on the utopia of happy love. What exactly Kukorelly means by this, to me not really fortunate, title is only to be guessed; probably 'family bliss', in which the narrator, who on one hand is recognisably the author, and on the other, an alienated fictitious person, was given to live in his childhood. A short story by Tolstoy, which is frequently quoted by Kukorelly (the quoted passages being printed bold), is about this family bliss. Consequently, the main theme of The *Fairy Valley* is 'family', a family happiness that can de described as 'Fairy Valley', and the scene is a family weekend home not far from Budapest. However, the form of the novel is definitely not that of a family novel, for despite the 'bliss' they experience in it, this family has no history fit for a novel.

Yet the book is called a novel, and before saying anything about it, one has to point out that no comprehensive story of any sort is to be found in it. Neither the father, nor the son has a story, in the sense that a story has a beginning and an end, that it progresses from one stage to another, or that it has some sort of meaning. Similarly, we cannot speak of a *Bildungsroman* either, although the material and experience that had gone into the novel ('Mysteries of the human heart') could have yielded one. Throughout the 371 pages, *Fairy Valley* is a montage or mosaic of texts a few lines in length. The metaphoric designations are imprecise because they refer to some sort of editing and building principles, which call for a kind of initiation and some distance to be recognised. Such principles may well exist, but it is a moot point whether they are decorative or functional. Apart from the reference to the Romantic tradition and the types of novel, the number nine appears to play a dominant, organising role: it consists of nine chapters, each chapter consists of nine sub-chapters, and the same nine dates (years only), are found at the head of all chapters, of which the relevant one is set in bold type. Also, it may be the author's mystification, but the writing of the novel is said to have lasted nine years. Epigraphs and poems are to be found at each chapter head. However, more conspicuous than such formal devices, to a degree threatening with mannerism, is the recurrence of certain memories as textual motifs. We do not, however, learn more about these, nor are they introduced from another angle. They are simply repeated over and over again, word by word, much as in the way motifs are repeated in minimalist music.

One may see as a functional organising principle the fact that the text is perceivably arranged on the basis of the associative working of memory. However, this does not help us arrange the fragments of memory into a whole story. The *Fairy Valley* is a pile of random, banal images of memories. The narrator evokes his childhood and adolescence, his impressions of his parents and his environment, in tiny fragments of memories. These are interconnected to a degree, within a passage or a chapter, or in the entire length of the novel, but the larger units still remain fragments themselves, and their credibility and connection with the rest of the fragments remain uncertain.

As regards the separate, rarely interconnecting blocks of themes, these are the figures of the father and the mother, various relatives, mainly aunts, the family weekend home, and playmates and games there; football games, bathing, the family home in an outer Budapest district and its surroundings, two years of military service, stays in the Soviet Union, mainly at the Black Sea and in Germany, the first job in a museum, and finally, girls and women. The time is the 1950s and 60s, and on account of the parents, earlier times too, such

as the Second World War, in which the father was severely wounded in Russia, and the post-war years, when the father, an army officer, became déclassé in the People's Democracy. For a time he just drifted, and eventually became a bank clerk.

The main theme is perhaps the father, and the son's unfinished relationship with him, who had meanwhile reached middle-age. The father comes from a land-owning family from the Hungarian Uplands (now Slovakia). Since the family property was lost because of the Trianon peace treaty, he studied at the military academy, the Ludovika, and became a 'Horthyist' army officer. No worse status could be had under Communism, and for a long time even his son had to suffer its consequences. In the son's memories, the father remains an army officer to the end of his life, which he, the son, thinks of as some sort of mystical 'poise'. His father accepted his fate, he did not revolt against it. He lived his restricted, demoted life in apparent satisfaction. He did his job as a clerk, he read, devoted himself to 'family bliss', tended the garden and played cards with friends. Occasionally he had an affair. He was a good-looking man, who had his conquests. He did not leave the country after 1956, though he had relatives in Germany. His relationship with his son was good, though they never talked about things that mattered. The reminiscing son wants to understand his father and his secrets, but eventually he admits that it is a secret that one cannot fathom. The father died relatively young, and the son had to return from the Soviet Union to attend the funeral. We never learn if he had actually done so or not. Nor do we know what he was doing there or whether he stayed there just once or several times.

Many things which ought to be talked of in a genuine family novel or a *Bildungsroman* remain unsaid. One is the narrator's studies; all we learn is, perfunctorily, that he had to try several times before he was eventually accepted by a university. Also, only a slight mention is made of his initial experiments in writing, though his status as a writer and his memoirs receive emphasis. The historical and political background against which he lives his private life is also treated sparsely and indirectly. They could have left in '56, but finally they stay in Hungary. Later, only the father and the son are issued passports, but mother and daughter have to stay behind as 'hostages'. Once, after his demobilisation, the son is summoned to the military command and is questioned about why they did not leave.

The personal sphere of the novel is nevertheless deeply embedded in the petty, restricted medium of the age. The *Fairy Valley* is, alongside all the personal aspirations, a novel about the Kádár regime and "existing socialism". This aspect of the novel seems to have gone unnoticed so far. Many small details, observations, impressions and scenes evoke the 1960s and 70s in an authentic way. As the son again and again sets himself to remember, in order to understand his father and his one-time own self, so his memory scrutinises the world of objects around him. More important than that, the lack of the story and meaning, the banality and random quality of the events, the monotonous, uninteresting private life are the Kádár regime itself. Every line in the *Fairy Valley* exudes the authentic atmosphere of the everydays of the age.

And of course, there are women in the memoir fragments. This was possibly the other main theme—the unfinished quality of his relationship to women. The narrator calls his mistresses and occasional partners C. All are designated by the letter. This is initially disturbing, because one may think they are all the same person. Later one realises that they are different women.

Obviously their number is finite, and some mentions refer to the same person. Those who read interviews with Kukorelly, learn from them that the women in the novel number nine altogether. This is not, however, clear from the story without a thorough-going analysis of the text, and even that can only be performed with difficulty. The C's therefore fade into one another, they have no separate characters, and this is a serious shortcoming. The writer's intention here may have been to depict the women from the perspective of the fundamental problems of the narrator. This should be more or less understood. As in his childhood, the parental home and its 'family bliss' were his only refuge, so later he became incapable of creating this happiness for himself—and for his unborn children. He always sought for a totality in women which is unattainable, for if a secret is something that cannot be fathomed, totality is something that cannot be achieved. Achieving it might mean a giving up of everything that is lacking in the totality achieved. Marriage should mean giving up other women, giving up everything incompatible with marriage, relinquishing the notion that anything could have priority over family happiness. And although for the narrator, especially in the barrenness of the Kádár regime and under the burden of being déclassé, family peace created by the parents through moral and emotional compromises offered relative security and happiness, he himself longs to achieve more and something different. This unattainable and more is called C—after Cordelia in Kierkegaard's *Diary of a Seducer.* Alongside Tolstoy's short story, Kierkegaard's work is the other text on which Kukorelly's novel is, as it were a palimpsest. The two quoted works enter into a dialogue in Kukorelly's story. We may interpret them to say that Kierkegaard's illusion of transcendental totality is an answer to the failure of family happiness, and, the other way round, 'family happiness' begins where the failure of the hopeless search for the transcendental is conceded.

This is a writer's programme meant only for the initiated in the *Fairy Valley,* in which, regretably, the memories attached to women are obscure and coalesce. We understand why Kukorelly could not and did not want to marry. He was in part attracted and in part repulsed by his parents' marriage. However, we never learn what sort of women he was attracted to, and what he lost through them.

The *Fairy Valley* is, as a whole, an important undertaking, which for me is made enjoyable especially by the sophisticated and ironic modulations of the narrative tone. Right to the end Kukorelly's narrator is walking a tightrope between a child's angle and the remembering adult's position and commentary in a way that cannot be separated in a sentence or a passage; you do not know what belongs to the one and what to the other perspective. He had the time and the opportunity to learn this double-talk; he grew up on it. "He now realised he speaks in two ways accidentally, even when he says the same, and although he is not warned, he no longer makes mistakes. Contingent is not the right word here, it is imprecise, yet it passes, so let it remain. Contingent, unconditional, instinctive. He notices it from what he said to others, he learns from that what to say and that he has already said it. Such things occupy the words, this is the order, this is what is intended, and they need just about all of it." The writer recaptures the occupied, ruined and false words, and creates from them a poetic prose, as he created it from the fragments of his life. ❧

Gábor Murányi

Six Years as an Ombudsman

Katalin Gönczöl and Judit Kóthy: *Ombudsman 1995–2001*. Budapest, Helikon, 538 pp. + illustrations. In Hungarian.

"In 1983," parliamentary commissioners existed in only 28 countries Katalin Gönczöl recalls:

> By the end of 1996, 85 countries had them. When I last met the ombudsman community in September 2000 in Dublin, more than 200 countries were represented. When our term of office came to an end in 2001, it was discovered at a Council of Europe seminar in Strasbourg, to everyone's surprise, that the ombudsman count in the "newborn" Central European countries was greater than in the long established democracies. The "grandparents" and "parents" had done their part. We were the populous third generation of new democracies.

Katalin Gönczöl is a criminologist by profession and served for six years as an ombudsman. She was the first to be elected commissioner for civil rights by the Hungarian Parliament in 1995. Jenő Kaltenbach was elected commissioner for minorities and László Majtényi data-protection commissioner at the same time. These offices rank high in the Hungarian political hierarchy. The commissioner for civil rights comes immediately below the President of the Constitutional Court, listed first in the Constitution.

Another relevant fact is that the legislature hesitated for five years after the change of system in 1989–90 before introducing an institution to monitor state power and protect citizens' interests. Then, six years later, in 2001, it felt that the ombudsmen had become unmanageable and prevented the reelection of Gönczöl and Majtényi.

The role of the political parties in this, separately or collectively, is not worth discussing here, not least because the term of office of the ombudsmen straddled two governments and the ombudsmen's annual reports could not be accused of partiality. Katalin Gönczöl did not address just those who happened to be in power in her Millennium statement:

> Let those at least feel pangs of conscience who offend against what we—the ombudsmen—supported by the media, stand for.

Not long after she failed to be re-elected by Parliament as civil-rights ombudsman, Gönczöl brought out a handy but

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sizeable volume: "In this book I should like to share my personal and professional experience with those interested," she wrote with modesty. Her co-author, Judit Kóthy, is a journalist identified by her peers as a high flyer at Hungarian Television until she became embroiled in political infighting and had to leave for reasons not unlike Gönczöl's.

The book, published by Helikon, is unusual in its approach. It is simpler to decide what it is not than what it is. It is not a memoir, for sure, regular or irregular, although it gives an accurate picture of the life of Hungary's first female ombudsman. Although the language is not cumbersome and legal, it is a professional account of how the ombudsman's office developed and operated, one that future historians, political scientists and law-makers and lawyers alike will neglect at their peril. It is not a political tract, although readers keen on spilled secrets will certainly find a few. It is not a string of interviews on the ombudsman institution, although almost everyone concerned with the subject has their say. Nor is it a collection of regulations or case studies, although the principal legislation and most interesting survey findings are all included. Finally, it is not a collection of figures, but the essential statistics of the institution are there in an Appendix. The book has a direct, personal tone, but is nonetheless a handbook and guide. Few will read it from cover to cover, but many will make use of it.

Katalin Gönczöl was born in 1944, graduated *summa cum laude* in 1968, and joined the newly created Criminology Faculty at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. She is the author of several textbooks of international repute, and was elected a vice-president of the International Criminological Society. But why did she become an ombudsman? By chance, which is certainly not the same as unexpectedly. One thing Gönczöl reveals to Kóthy is that she first came across the ombudsman notion in the mid-1980s, when various members of the intelligentsia with differing motives began exchanging views on reforming socialism and on ever-more-pressing social problems that would eventually overturn the system. Though friends remarked in the mid-1980s that the office of ombudsman, more than anything, would suit her, Gönczöl as a research criminologist rejected the idea. (She was disturbed at the time mainly by the implications for her professional career.) As she recalls,

> Our Western friends and institutions over there knew and we began to say constantly in 1985, that society would erupt somehow, because every index of deviancy indicated this. High suicide rates, homelessness, drugs and accompanying social and political problems, rising crime rates, integration problems for young people, socially rooted problems pointed out by psychologists, new types of juvenile crime, and the insupportable system of institutional care. These symptoms showed, in Durkheim's words, that society was suffering from anomie, in other words from a moral crisis of values.

You might say that she remained consistent a decade later, when she rejected the initial requests by saying that she was unsuited to the office. Then, when the law was formulated with great difficulty and following many compromises, Gönczöl's interest and consideration were aroused by two 'details'. First, it would be possible in future to deal with 'individual rights', and secondly, the ombudsman's word would not be holy writ, not binding in law. The ombudsman would only make recommendations in theoretical or practical cases and request, but not order, action. It was not a question of power, but of weight, ability to convince, and truth.

There could hardly be a more exciting challenge for an intellectual intent on changing and influencing the world.

Gönczöl does not attempt to say how far she may have met that challenge. Come to think of it, the book is really a "mere" chronicle or record of six years in which the ombudsman institution settled in and became inescapable in a Hungary busily engaged in becoming democratic. Although Gönczöl remarks to her interviewer—a little sadly, as a task awaiting the ombudsman—that very few Hungarians seem to be familiar with the rights ensured and guaranteed to them in the Constitution and the law of the land, another figure shows that people pursue their rights persistently. For in those six years, no fewer than 46,000 complaints were submitted to the general ombudsman. That means almost 6500 a year, or 20 new files a day, including weekends and holidays—20 new cases to take up or pass on to the appropriate institution.

There is a phrase in Hungarian of literary origin: a "nightingale legal action". In a long verse parable, János Arany (friend of the 19th-century revolutionary poet Sándor Petőfi, and like him, a translator of Shakespeare) made immortal fools of Péter and Pál, two men with adjacent gardens. They began endless litigation about which of them was being addressed by a nightingale that sang in a nut tree on the land of one, but on a bough that hung over the land of the other. Gönczöl tackled her work as ombudsman with energy, and relates that she did not necessarily disdain such petty, or rather pitiable, cases, especially if one party was not just a "neighbour" concerned with his or her own peace, relaxation or "undisturbed use of property", but an institution representing authority in some form. Nonetheless, the matters that came before the civil-rights ombudsman were not all "nightingale cases". According to another statistical presentation in the book, seemingly endless civil disputes that have gone on for years, pinpointing in the process the weak points in normal judiciary procedure, rival in numbers grievances involving the penal system. Nor has any mention been made of the fact, that, due to the historical circumstances of the former socialist countries, most public-service providers have retained a monopoly, and as such, inherited an inclination to act as an authority.

The concerns of the new ombudsman when the office was being established are also characteristic. Most government offices frequently pay no regard to legally fixed deadlines or they obstruct applications in other ways, but when complaints were addressed to the ombudsmen, there was an immediate acknowledgement of receipt, giving the number under which the submission had been filed. That was still a long way from the "solution", of course, and did not even amount to a promise of reaching one, because it is not possible initially to know whether an application has arrived in the appropriate place—or whether it is within the ombudsman's competence to deal with it. (The acknowledgement was, if you like, a polite gesture from a "service provider", and proved so successful that several other institutions soon followed the example.) The endless, intricate work of the ombudsman's office can be best demonstrated, perhaps, by the fact that rather more than three-quarters of the applications ended with the applicant being given exhaustive information or referred to the right government office. Only in the remaining quarter did the commissioner take action, conduct an examination, initiate conciliation, propose a legislative amendment or a new law, or simply write a report or recommendation.

In cases where "constitutional irregularity" is strongly suspected, the small but extremely agile staff of the ombudsman's office began a thorough examination. The first case study, entitled "The assertion of the rights of patients and citizens in psychiatric homes", ultimately caused a major stir. This is an area of controversy all over Europe, but in post-socialist Hungary, the human-rights situation of the patiens is deplorable. For one thing, almost everywhere, "the clothing of those in care was deficient." Furthermore, the patients in most homes were controlled by subjecting them to demeaning punishments, such as confinement in beds surrounded by wire netting. Although the examination on this occasion was intended simply to assess the situation and the scope for institutional change, many in the psychiatric profession took it as a personal attack. Similar sour reactions were the fate of reports such as "Orders and implementation of residence in places assigned by the aliens police and aliens police custody" and "Assertion of pupils' rights in institutions of secondary education".

One measure of the success of the ombudsman institution is the impressive number of amended regulations and official procedures it initiated. But the book confirms that such tangible changes were less important than the way the institution and the battles it fought (victoriously, or through legislative amendments, or simply by issuing a statement) helped to promote self-esteem among citizens.

That adds to the respect one feels for the self-restraint with which Gönczöl, in discussing the experience of six years, redefined "the civil-rights duties of the parliamentary commissioner" by inserting a phrase. She did so by augmenting the earlier definition—"examining and causing to be examined the irregularities in respect of constitutional rights that may come to his/her knowledge, and initiating general or individual measures aimed at remedying them"—by saying that the ombudsman, based on constitutional authority, could at most "make an attempt" to do this. ❧

László Lugo Lugosi

Photo Strelisky

Etelka L. Baji: *Strelisky. Egy fényképészdinasztia száz éve* (Strelisky. A Hundred Years of a Photographic Dynasty). Budapest, Magyar Fotográfiai Múzeum, 2001, 120 pp. Illustrated.

It was with delighted anticipation that I opened this album. My own research has shown me how little has survived from the early period of Hungarian photography, particularly in archives. Indeed, those there have often found their way into the files by chance, and having done so, they did not always survive the ravages of time.

The Strelisky company was no exception in this respect, as this book confirms. Their history has had to be pieced together by the author like a mosaic, even though the second-hand bookshops of Budapest are replete with Strelisky photographs, and the Strelisky signature is familiar not only to members of the profession but also to the general public.

The Strelisky family was Jewish. They came to Hungary from Galicia, that is Austrian Poland, where Lipót Strelisky, the first photographer in the family, was born. The exact date is not known, but historians have put it at around 1820. Lipót's father, Dovidl Brod, was appointed cantor to the Pest Jewish congregation around 1830. Lipót had six brothers and sisters, and interestingly, one of his brothers, Náthán, also chose photography as an occupation. There is a surviving photograph of the Strelisky family in 1848, showing all the members except the father, who had died earlier.

Lipót Strelisky first trained as a goldsmith. There is nothing unusual about that. Early photographers were often goldsmiths, silversmiths or apothecaries, or occasionally painters or showmen. Daguerre, considered the inventor of photography, had been a showman entertaining audiences with painted dioramas. Once the family moved to Pest, Lipót Strelisky applied for a permit to settle some time between 1840 and 1843, after legislation in 1840 had allowed Jews to live in Hungarian towns. The permit was obtained. In 1843, he made another application to the council, in which he still described himself as a goldsmith. It is not known exactly when Lipót became a photographer, but it may have been some time around 1843. That is the date given by the Strelisky firm in an entry in the catalogue for the Millenary Exhibition of 1896. It is also uncertain where Lipót managed to

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learn how to take daguerreotypes. It may have been from a travelling French daguerreotype photographer called Jules Durier, or from a Hungarian called Lajos Kawalky, who had likewise earlier been a goldsmith. Whatever the case, an advertisement in a newspaper of the time announced that Strelisky would take daguerreotypes "at any time, in a few seconds", in his apartment on the third floor of a Budapest house. It is interesting that Strelisky initially did not work in a studio made specifically for photographic purposes, simply taking his pictures in one room of a rented Pest apartment. The daguerreotype had only been invented by Daguerre in 1839, and the few years that had passed did not diminish the novelty and the popularity of the invention.

Thus Lipót Strelisky began taking pictures using the daguerreotype process. Judging from Etelka L. Baji's volume, relatively few daguerreotypes from that early period have survived. He certainly photographed Hungarian officers in the 1848–9 anti-Habsburg war, after the successful siege of Buda in 1849, although many of his takes are known only from lithographs or drawings based on them. On the other hand, a stereo-daguerreotype of his has survived, and it is the only Hungarian stereo photograph from that period.

Early photography supplanted much portrait painting at that time, and Strelisky too took portraits. Another special item to have survived is a picture made by this process, or as we would call it now, a reproduction of a lithograph portraying the opening of the first Representative National Assembly in 1848. Thereafter, Strelisky also began to work with paper negatives, the other technique available at the time, although few of his pictures copied on salt paper have survived.

In 1857, Strelisky travelled to Paris to improve his knowledge. Later, in 1863, he

Sándor Strelisky:
The Empress-Queen Elisabeth

also went to Germany. As an account of the period relates, he visited on his travels the most famous studios, getting to know the latest discoveries in photography. An important change in his life came between the two journeys, when he opened his first real studio in 1861. At the beginning of that year, he still worked in his old apartment, but in the spring he applied for a building permit from the city council. The studio was installed in the attic of No. 11 Dorottya utca, in today's downtown 5th District, and had six rooms. There, in 1863, he took some "revolutionary" pictures that caused something of a scandal. They showed actresses stripped to their bodices, and a stern panel of judges did not want them to be exhibited to the pub-

lic. This is the earliest sign that Strelisky was in touch with the world of theatre and engaged in taking theatrical photographs —a close connection that was to be a feature of the firm for the rest of its history.

Strelisky was highly successful, winning several awards for his photographs, including medals in Vienna in 1865, Paris in 1867 and London in 1871. The business must have done well financially, because in 1871, he built a three-storey apartment house in Pest. This boasted frescoes with a photographic theme on the top floor, painted by Károly Lotz, one of the major painters of the day, who painted the ceiling of the State Opera House in Budapest.

At the end of the 1870s, the studio moved into the neighbouring building, at 9 Dorottya utca, where Lipót Strelisky began to initiate his son Sándor into the secrets of photography. Sándor Strelisky was born around 1859, although the year is not precisely known. By the 1880s, Strelisky's studio was favoured by the art world, the aristocracy and, most importantly, by actors and actresses. Portraits by Sándor Strelisky form a gallery of all who counted in society and the arts at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. These included politicians and several members of the House of Habsburg resident in Hungary. In its prime, around 1900, the Strelisky studio took portraits of an astonishing number of celebrities. Among the most surprising items reproduced in the book are montage group portraits, which are probably first published there. These extraordinary compositions each involve several people, and because of the mounting, they are highly theatrical, static—indeed artificial. They seem to have more in common with historical painting than with photography. The figures stand before a painted background. People today might be inclined to dismiss the whole series as kitsch, but they demonstrate the taste of the period with seismographic accuracy. The background to the picture *Csárdás* shows an idyllic arbour. Another has a hall in the Royal Palace of Buda as its background. Pictures were taken of a 'Living Chess Game' and to mark the jubilee of the Philharmonic Orchestra. These are direct continuations and descendants of the theatrical Strelisky shots, which in those days were fully posed.

Sándor Strelisky: The novelist Mór Jókai. *Before November 9, 1887*

Later photography critics attached little value to Strelisky's montages, but in their time, they were highly successful. They also attracted attention for their size. *Csárdás,* for instance, was shown at the Millenary Exhibition in a giant version measuring three by one-and-a-half metres. (It also won a Grand Prix at the 1900 World Fair in Paris.) The Millenary Exhibi-

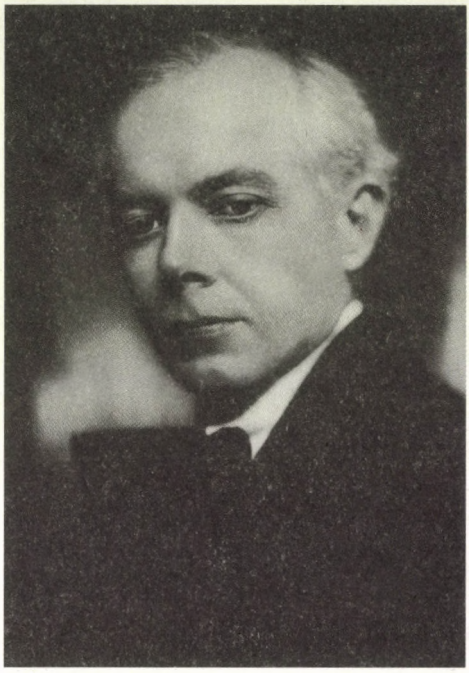
Gerbeaud House on Gizella (now Vörösmarty) tér. The Strelisky studios were on the top floor, a signboard on the façade displays the name

Sándor Strelisky: Live Chess. *A benefit performance at the Várszínház (Castle Theatre) on April 15, 1902, given with the participation of members of the aristocracy*

tion was a success for Sándor Strelisky in other ways as well. He and seven others were members of an Association of Photographers formed for the event, and given sole rights to capture all its events and scenes. Around 1896, the Strelisky Studio was appointed as Imperial and Court Photographers, a patent which was afterwards displayed on the backs of the firm's photographs.

About the same time, in 1895 or 1896, the firm opened a new studio known as the 'city shop', just round the corner in Gizella tér (today's Vörösmarty tér). Portraits were taken there as well, along with large numbers of theatrical photographs. In 1910–11, the Strelisky studios moved permanently to Gizella tér, to premises on the top floor of the present Gerbeaud building. There were altogether 15 rooms, three of them studios, and other facilities such as a winter garden, a goldfish pond and a fountain. Theatrical photography was the main activity, and Strelisky's can be said to have been *the* theatrical studio in Budapest at the time. Alongside the portraits of actors and actresses, theatrical scenes too were set up for the benefit of the photographer. On shooting days, waggon-loads of costumes, props and sets would arrive at the studio, so that the director could erect scenes and have them photographed.

Eighteen ninety-nine saw the appearance of the Strelisky work of the greatest moment to history and art history: *The Steindl Album.* Imre Steindl had designed the Parliament Building, which was then in construction on the Pest bank of the Danube. The imposing album contains 130 half-figure portraits of those involved in the construction. This meant the best and most eminent engineers, artists and craftsmen, which makes *The Steindl Album* a document of outstanding significance.



Sándor Strelisky: Béla Bartók, *cca 1923*

The success of the firm continued until the death of Sándor Strelisky in 1923. After that, it declined rapidly, and there is little documentary evidence of its survival other than the transcripts of a lengthy court case over the rights to a photograph of the Regent Miklós Horthy. Although the studio existed until the 1940s, it was producing only unimportant mass portraiture by then.

As I mentioned, not much is available on the history of photography in nineteenth-century Hungary, either by way of documentary sources or works dealing with the period. There is every hope, however, that this will be mended in the future, bearing in mind that Etelka L. Baji's slim volume on the Strelisky family is the twenty-fifth of a history of photography series published by the Hungarian Museum of Photography. ❧

Paul Stirton

Vernacular Modernism

Anthony Gall: *Kós Károly műhelye: Tanulmány és Adattár. The Workshop of Károly Kós: A Study and Documentation.* Budapest, Mundus Kiadó, 2002, 527 pp. (Parallel text in Hungarian and English.)

In 1911 the young Swiss architect Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (later to take the name Le Corbusier) plotted the itinerary of his 'oriental journey' through Europe sorting each of the places he had visited into three categories: industry, culture and folklore. Budapest, in architectural terms, came under folklore. This might seem odd, given the fact that for several decades the Hungarian capital had been one of the fastest growing cities in Europe. Paradoxically, when the English Arts and Crafts designer Walter Crane visited the Hungarian capital in 1900, he had been struck by the opposite impression. With his interest in traditional craft survivals, Crane actually found Budapest to be "the most up-to-date city I have ever seen". There is a sense in which both were accurate in their impressions because the years between these two visits saw the emergence of a full-blown National Romantic style of architecture which had spawned a series of wooden buildings inspired by the village architecture of Transylvania in the heart of the 'stony mass' of Budapest. This urge towards a national style had been developing for some time and could almost be taken as the defining characteristic of Hungarian high culture at the end of the nineteenth century. The dominant preoccupations, however, were often with sources in South Central Asia and Persia which were thought to be the original seat of the Magyar peoples. The new generation of designers, who came of age in the first decade of the twentieth century, had less interest in this remote and exotic world. Instead, they sought a more authentic model for their national ideals in Hungarian vernacular architecture and, in particular, in the rural buildings of the Kalotaszeg region. The finest example of this tendency is Károly Kós, the subject of a major new monograph by Anthony Gall.

If the new spirit of National Romanticism (or Romantic Nationalism, as it is sometimes known in America) placed a premium on youth, then Kós was one of its greatest prodigies. Eliel Saarinen was just 27 years old when he received the commission for the Finnish Pavilion at the 1900 Paris Exhibition. Gaudi was 31 when he took over control of the Sagrada

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Familia in Barcelona, and Charles Rennie Mackintosh 28 when he was awarded the commission for the Glasgow School of Art. Kós was just 2 years out of college in 1908, aged 25, when he received the commission for the pavilions at the Budapest Zoo. Within a year he was also designing the primary school in Városmajor utca in Buda, and in the following two years had gained the contracts for the Székely National Museum at Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfintu Gheorge), the Calvinist church at Monostori út in Kolozsvár (Cluj), and the main square at Wekerle, the new garden suburb on the south-eastern edge of Pest. These were all high-profile commissions, awarded by august public bodies (Budapest Municipal Council, the National Directorate of Museums, the Royal Ministry of Finance, etc.), yet they were all given to a designer who was still in his 20s and had hardly completed a single building.

These were heady times for an ambitious young architect, especially one with a mission to reinvent Hungarian architecture in a style that was both 'modern' and 'national'. Kós was certainly up to the task and he set to work producing designs, models, drawings and prints to meet the demands of his clients. He was clearly driven, in the sense that he had ambitions far beyond simple professional success. Even as a student he had begun writing literary and theoretical works that reveal a single-minded dedication towards his chosen vocation. One senses a certain earnestness, not to say dogmatism, in such a young man, but there is no doubting his sense of purpose when he writes, "Our people chose the middle ages as their stylistic base, and have never abandoned it, even to this day"; going on to add, "Medieval art forms the basis of Hungarian folk-art and folk-art forms the basis of our national art".

Such sentiments were hardly new. Similar views had been expressed by Ödön Lechner and his followers for many years. Kós, however, found little to interest him in the monumental architecture of Lechner. The great man had performed a major function in focussing attention on the issues of a 'national language of form' but his grand and exotic public buildings showed only limited awareness of the indigenous folk sources that Kós felt were central to the new agenda. Like his contemporaries across the full spectrum of the arts and sciences, Kós wanted to preserve the essential truths and living spirit that he sensed in the vernacular buildings of Transylvania and, above all, in the Kalotaszeg region. In 1907 he had embarked on a major study tour of the area around Kolozsvár, and it was this, more than any folios of historic architecture, that informed his work. It is partly these folk sources which make the designs for the Zoo pavilions so attractive and engaging. Not only are they built using traditional rustic materials (roughly hewn wood and heavy stone rubble), there is a human scale and variety to the buildings which makes this whole complex in the middle of a huge, modern city something of a curiosity. Several commentators have remarked that the zoo is reminiscent of a Skansen (folk building museum) or exhibition site, made all the more unexpected because it has been designed for exotic animals. If it seems unusual to modern visitors, one can only imagine what it must have been like for the formally dressed, urban bourgeoisie of Budapest who flocked there after its opening.

The Zoo pavilions could perhaps be explained as the architecture of leisure and display, but the four commissions which followed it seem to span the range of serious, public building types: a school, a museum, a church and a community square at the centre of a modern housing development. To Anthony Gall, these

buildings confirm the success of the new style, proving that Transylvanian vernacular could be developed into an urban language of building suitable for modern society although, to some critics at least, this remains debatable. What it certainly indicates is that the new style was taken up with great enthusiasm, sweeping almost everything before it. Kós could hardly keep up with the amount of work he was given. There is an anecdote that while working on the Zoo, Kós and his collaborator, Dezső Zrumeczky, slept in shifts so that they could produce the drawings needed to keep up with the building work, one relieving the other at the drawing board as each was forced to break from exhaustion. Kós also recounts a story in his memoirs that he was not particularly interested in the Wekerle commission, had no experience in that sort of thing and only pulled together a modest proposal at the last minute. Even allowing for the tendency to underplay one's efforts to further emphasise the brilliance of the design, the fact that he gained the commission at all, never mind that it was awarded unanimously, gives some indication of the massive popular appeal of contemporary architecture inspired by the medieval townscapes of Transylvania.

Kós's period at the height of popularity was short lived. The First World War brought an end to major building projects and the aftermath was so disastrous for Hungary that the whole culture was fundamentally altered. The vernacular style that had inspired architects and clients alike in the decade before 1914 seemed less vital and relevant to the new realities of the 1920s. Circumstances were even more difficult for Kós since he had built his own house, Crow Castle, at Sztána in his native Transylvania, and after the war he chose to stay there rather than move to the truncated Hungary of Admiral Horthy. It was a moral choice more than anything else. Kós had strong views on the importance of the region and may even have been entertaining ideas of an independent Transylvania before the catastrophe of Trianon. He was also mindful of the need to maintain the culture of the Hungarian minority in the greater Romania and applied himself to this with characteristic zeal. At various times in his post-war career, Kós was a printer, publisher, designer, author, lecturer, politician, farmer and tireless campaigner for the preservation of the historic culture of the region. One can fully understand why in 1932 he was described as the "general Transylvanian factotum".

Even in a climate where his architectural style was unlikely to attract many commissions, his multifarious activities must have hindered the development of his career as an architect. As a result, Kós's later work has always been less well known and difficult to assess. The situation was made even worse by the destruction of his archives when Crow Castle was ransacked in 1944, making it all but impossible to gain a clear view of his work in the interwar period. The detailed catalogue of buildings and projects which forms the second part of this book is therefore a very useful and informative resource. Gall has brought together a wide range of documents including drawings, prints, primary writings, early photographs, postcards and a large number of good modern photographs taken especially for the book. He has also taken a strict line on the buildings to be included in the corpus; a wise policy since several known buildings have been lost while many others have, in the past, been attributed to Kós without any supporting evidence. This last point is significant because the Transylvanian vernacular became a popular and recognisable style very quickly and it was easily imitated at

a basic level for small houses and partial alterations to existing buildings. I myself remember being shown two houses in Sfintu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy) in the early 1980s which were, by popular account, designed by Kós. Gall has rightly excluded both of those and no doubt many more, although that doesn't rule out the possibility of information coming to light which would put them back into the canon. There is more work to be done but Gall has provided a core of reliably documented buildings covering everything from schools and hospitals to agricultural outbuildings which will form the basis for all scholarship on Kós from now on.

The pattern of Kós's life poses other problems to the historian. The natural division between pre- and post-Trianon makes for an uneven career trajectory and an extremely lop-sided biography when one remembers that he lived to a great age. (He died in 1977, aged 93.) Kós is unquestionably one of the major figures in twentieth century Hungarian architecture but, despite the claims of his supporters, all his major designs were completed by the time he was thirty. Apart from the private houses, church restorations and fairly modest agricultural developments that were the mainstay of his later architectural practice, the only significant buildings after 1914 are two schools and an art centre in the late 1920s, which are themselves fairly traditional in form and structure. This is hardly the fault of the architect. The absence of opportunities to design major buildings would limit any architect's reputation in the larger scheme of history. To give more balance to the career overall, however, Gall has made a case for Kós's later work as "a significant contribution to modern architecture in Transylvania". To this reader, at least, that argument remains unconvincing. The central problem seems to have been the inhibiting effects of Kós's overriding priority in the 1920s and 30s—to preserve the beleaguered Hungarian culture of Transylvania—which limited his ability to develop as an architect. Not only were the immediate and wider issues of his community of paramount importance, which must have distracted him from ongoing international debates on architecture, it appears to have encouraged him to cling on to the forms which had proved so vital and successful in the years before 1914.

Discussion of Kós's generation always invites parallels with the contemporary work of Finnish architects like Eliel Saarinen. There is every justification for this since, not only were the two men working in a similar vein, they knew one another and corresponded on matters of design and national culture. Saarinen's career, of course, unfolded in a manner quite different to that of Kós, just as the history of Finland played out in a very different manner to that of Transylvania. Freed from the political pressures to hold on to his earlier forms, Saarinen's work developed into something more expansive as his career moved on to the international stage after the First World War. It is revealing that when Kós saw a recent work by Saarinen at the International Architectural Exhibition of 1931 he felt that he didn't recognise it. There was nothing "Finnish" about it, "either in materials, or line, or tone, or contrast; on the other hand it was not lacking in sobriety, coldness, even German *Sachlichkeit*". In short, Saarinen seemed to have betrayed the sense of nationhood in design which Kós regarded as a burden of personal responsibility. It is this close identification with the political currents of the period which makes Kós's life and work so interesting, even when the architecture itself seems uneven. In that sense, one might hope that *The Workshop of Károly Kós* will have a wider readership than architecture specialists alone.

Important as it is, this book leaves several questions unresolved. Kós's work is closely related to that of Ede Thoroczkói Wigand, to the extent that the older architect seems to have regarded Kós and his circle, the Fiatalok (the Young Ones), as unacknowledged followers. Wigand's role in Kós's development is glossed over here, as it is in most other accounts, save for some passing comments on their brief collaboration in 1910. The similarity in their drawing styles alone is worth closer analysis and may give more credit to Wigand as an innovator in this field. One might also have expected a stronger case to be made for Kós as a forerunner of green architecture and environmentalism, which helped in the rehabilitation of several earlier architects during the 1980s and 90s. The theme is touched on, but may be worth further development.

A bigger problem is the irritating production weaknesses which mar the book overall. It is over-designed for a scholarly work and the layout of the information is often confusing, with the result that it is sometimes difficult to use for detailed analysis. An example of this can be seen in attempting to trace the location and medium of Kós's original designs. As an outstanding graphic artist, Kós often rendered his perspective drawings in a manner reminiscent of woodcut prints; he also made woodcut prints of his buildings, and these were all, in turn, reproduced by photo-lithography in contemporary journals, from where many have been reproduced here. Some clarification of the status of these images would have helped. The text could also have been more closely proof-read, both for grammar and typographic errors, at least in the English sections. Having said this, I would not wish to undermine the genuine qualities of this monograph. Few Hungarian architects or designers of the twentieth century have been so well covered as Kós is in this large and generous book. The translated primary sources alone would make it essential reading for anyone interested in turn-of-the-century architecture. As an introduction to this major figure and his work, it has no equivalent and offers a mass of fascinating and essential information. ❧

Péter Bozó

Liaison Dangereuse

Franz Liszt and Agnes Street-Klindworth: A Correspondence, 1854–1886. Introduced, translated, annotated and edited by Pauline Pocknell. Franz Liszt Studies Series No.8, ed. by Michael Saffle. New York, Pendragon Press, 2000.

...c'étaient les lettres mêmes qu'on voulait faire connaître, et non pas seulement un ouvrage fait d'aprés elles....

Choderlos de Laclos

Those who do not know who Agnes Street-Klindworth was will probably find it difficult to understand why a full century had to pass before this correspondence was made accessible in full. It also calls for an explanation why it was necessary to publish these documents again when the pioneering publisher of the Liszt's correspondence, Marie Lipsius, better known as La Mara, had already devoted a full volume to this relationship.[1]

There have been several precedents in Liszt studies showing that new research viewpoints and results often call for a thorough revision as well as revised new editions of earlier works after a while. For instance, important and outstanding as the earlier publication of the exchange of letters between Liszt and the Countess d'Agoult was in the 1930s,[2] that edition had to be complemented and revised after seventy years. This in itself justified the publication of a new edition by Serge Gut and Jacqueline Bellas.[3] The situation is similar in the case of the correspondence of the composer with his mother, which, after La Mara's German-language variant,[4] has been published at long last in the original.[5] The Street-Klindworth letters had been crying for a revision even more, but they represent a unique case of research and document publishing. It was not only the outdated character of the editor's methods of La Mara that made a new edition necessary.

It has been known for a long time that La Mara deliberately censored the letters, although she knew the complete contents of the sources.[6] She deleted or amended paragraphs without indicating this in her editions. Her reason for doing so is easy to understand: the correspondence included details severely compromising for both Liszt and Agnes Street-Klindsworth.

Agnes operated as a secret agent all her life. She inherited this profession from her father, Georg Klindworth, who had written confidential reports for a number of leading European politicians from Metternich to Bismarck. On top of her adventurous profession, during her stay in Weimar in the mid-1850s, she became intimately involved with Liszt.

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The date of Agnes's arrival in Weimar and the beginning of her affair with Liszt is enshrouded in mystery. She stayed there until April 1855 and, according to Pauline Pocknell, all that can be taken for certain after a thorough study of the correspondence of Liszt and his acquaintances is that she must have arrived sometime between March 1853 and July 1854. Agnes's seeming reason for visiting Liszt was to take piano lessons. What the real assignment calling her to the German principality may have been can only be guessed at. Since her father was working for the Russian court at the time, two explanations seem to be handy. One of her purposes may have been to spy on Liszt's second companion, Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein, a Russian exile, and to use her charms to win the composer over from her to herself. In the light of what happened later, this is very likely, but it points to the wider diplomatic context of her arrival that it coincides conspicuously with the Crimean War. It is also likely that the beginning of the affair can be dated to one particular piano lesson, one of the subjects of which, according to the confidential references of the letters, was Chopin's Étude in A Flat Minor. The relationship continued after Agnes's departure too. The correspondence evidences several encounters between 1855 and 1858 in Köln, Düsseldorf and Aachen. Later on their complicated love affair turned into friendship, which, with some minor pauses, lasted until the death of Liszt. The documents published by Pauline Pocknell read like a true 19th-century epistolary novel, a romance coupled with conspiracy and passion.

When La Mara's book was published, Agnes herself was still alive and, if only because of Liszt's heirs, it would have been risky to reveal every detail of a correspondence of this type. It is less easy to understand why the sources were never used by such important Liszt scholars as Peter Raabe or Emil Haraszti, even though, as Pocknell's work makes it quite clear, they were fully aware of the contents of the original documents.[7] Anything that had been accessible in print before the present edition came out either bears the prettifying marks of the editor (La Mara), is not based on the original, and is therefore inaccurate (Huré—Knepper)[8], or publishes some of the details of the letters only in translation (Winklhofer). Thus the importance of Pocknell's edition consists mainly in the manner in which the originals are handled. Her book is the first to include every surviving piece of the correspondence of the composer and Agnes Street-Klindworth, as well as containing them in full, in their original form, unabridged. The correspondence is somewhat one-sided, but that is not the editor's fault. Liszt in fact fulfilled the request of his lover and carefully destroyed her letters. Consequently, of the 160 documents found in the book, only one comes from Agnes's hand.

Another conspicuously disproportionate feature of the correspondence is that its vast majority was written after Agnes's departure from Weimar. Only two short, fairly formal messages survived from the early stages of the affair. Nevertheless, many details of this intimate relationship can be reconstructed from the available sources, providing a great deal of interesting information on Liszt's mental and physical condition, family affairs and, most important, on compositions in the making, completed or still planned. Some of these works contain obvious references to Agnes's person or to Liszt's feelings about her. A good example is the *Dante* Symphony, the first movement of which recalls the history of the eternal punishment in hell of Paolo and Francesca, the adulterous lovers of the *Divina Commedia*. Street-Klindworth was

able to follow the birth of the symphony, moreover, according to all signs, she was actually one of its inspirers.[9] She also inspired a piano adaptation by Liszt of a song by Eduard Lassen *(Ich weil in tiefer Einsamkeit),* which, because of its lyrics, was clearly regarded by the composer as a *Liebesbotschaft* to Agnes (Letter 70).

The main topic of the correspondence, however, is politics. The first few letters make Liszt's avid interest in contemporary writings on political topics quite apparent. For instance, in Letter 3, he recommends to her a section of the book *Les soirées de Saint Pétersbourg* by the philosopher, writer and diplomat Joseph Marie de Maistre. This book must have been one of his favourites because he makes reference to it in other letters as well (Nos. 17 and 60). In Letter 5, he requests information from Agnes on *L'Equilibre européen,* the planned periodical of another French statesman, François Guizot, one of the Klindworths' employers, because, as he points out, he cannot find the time for reading. Printed information, though, made up only a part of Liszt sources of news, and not even the most important part. Thanks to her strange occupation, Agnes was able to provide fresh information on current political events. She made copies of her father's reports, which she regularly passed on to Liszt. Only one dispatch of this type survived, but this particular document (attachment to Letter 139), left out of La Mara's edition, adds interesting information on the origins of a Liszt composition. It is known that that the composer wrote a memento to the memory of Emperor Maximilian I of Mexico, accompanied by a quote from Propertius, at the head of the piece *Marche funèbre* in Volume III of the cycle *Années de pèlerinage.* The emperor, a brother of the Emperor Francis Joseph, was executed by Mexican revolutionaries in July 1867. Liszt received fast and accurate information on the background of the incident. Agnes's letter and the attached account, written on the following day, reported in detail on the diplomatic efforts made by the Austrian government to save the life of Maximilian, albeit with no success.

Readers will like this book not only for its contents but also for its logical structure and its systematic presentation of sources. The editorial work is exemplary. Beside the English translation, every single document is also printed in its original form, in French, with the exception of one, the manuscript of which seems to have been lost. The transcriptions follow Liszt's original spelling and punctuation with great precision. The book is both a source publication and a comparative study. In the transcripts in the original language, Pocknell precisely marks the parts which are missing in La Mara's edition, enabling the reader to measure the extent of La Mara's editorial intervention. The exchanges between Agnes and the composer are complemented with a number of other sources, including a facsimile of a complete manuscript of a song by Liszt *(Anfangs wollt ich fast verzagen).* Interpretation of the documents is aided by an abundance of explanatory notes, showing the impressive knowledge of the editor. Pauline Pocknell made a thorough study of historical documents, like the diplomatic notes in the archives of the French foreign ministry, or Georg Klindworth's secret reports found in a number of archives all over Europe. The only mildly uncomfortable point one might mention is that the reader of the French texts has to turn the pages forward to the English translations to find the editor's comments. The translations and original text publications are preceded by extensive and highly informative introductory studies. In the first part of the Introduction, Pocknell provides an overview of the cur-

rent state of the publishing of Liszt's correspondence and, while examining the history of the study of the letters, offers a surprisingly objective critique of the frequently questionable work and methods of her predecessors. This is followed by a description of the importance of the surviving letters and various problems related to them. In the second part, she gives an account of her editing, transliterating and translating principles, while the third part deals with the strange career of Agnes and her father, and with the story of the affair. Especially revealing and interesting is the section "Liszt in Love", in which Pocknell shows, in a very sensitive and thought-provoking way, certain patterns that can be discovered in Liszt's affairs with Countess d'Agoult, Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein, Agnes Street-Klindworth and Olga Meyendorff.

Each time, the emergence of an emotional relationship was sudden and unexpected; each lady was at the end of her twenties; none had an unproblematic past. They were usually dissatisfied with their social and family relations, and all were educated, intelligent and receptive to art. At the same time they all had a measure of social, mental and financial independence, and were well-travelled, cosmopolitan women of French culture. They all lived intensive emotional lives, and all had a social position inaccessible to Liszt. The comparison also shows what made the composer's relationship to Agnes different, what made her attractive and special to him: their mutual interest in politics, and the freedom that, in contrast to the other women, Agnes was able to offer him.

The method used by Pauline Pocknell to follow the changes in the character and intensity of the relationship is also remarkable. On the basis of the frequency, tone and themes of the letters, she distinguishes nine stages in the history of the relationship from Agnes's departure from Weimar to the death of Liszt, pointing out the events which may be seen as turning-points in their common and individual lives.

The above review will perhaps convince readers that Pauline Pocknell's edition of these letters will not only be helpful to all students of the art and life of Liszt but also fascinating and exciting reading to a general audience. ❧

NOTES

1 ■ *Franz Liszts Briefe. III. Briefe an eine Freundin.* Hrsg. Von La Mara. Leipzig, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1894.

2 ■ *Correspondance de Franz Liszt et de la Comtesse d'Agoult 1840–1864.* Publ. par Diel Ollivier. Vol. I-II. Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1933–1934.

3 ■ Franz Liszt—Marie d'Agoult: *Correspondance.* Prés. et ann. par Serge Gut et Jacqueline Bellas. Paris, Fayard, 2001.

4 ■ *Franz Liszts Briefe an seine Mutter.* Hrsg. Von La Mara. Leipzig, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1918.

5 ■ *Franz Liszt. Briefwechsel mit seiner Mutter.* Hrsg. Von Klára Hamburger. Eisenstadt, Knad & Danck, 2000.

6 ■ La Mara's falsifications were already mentioned by Emil Haraszti (*Franz Liszt.* Paris, Picard, 1967, p. 170) but the first to treat the issue in greater detail was Sharon Winklhofer in the study "Editorial Censorship in Liszt's Letters to Agnes Street Klindworth" (JALS 9 [June 1981], pp. 42–49). Still, the figure of Agnes Street-Klindworth gained proper stature first in Alan Walker's authoritative biography of Liszt (*Franz Liszt: The Weimar Years, 1848–1861.)* New York, Alfred Knopf, 1988, pp. 210–211.

7 ■ See "Introduction I", XV.

8 ■ *Franz Liszt: Correspondance.* Ed. par Pierre-Antoine Huré et Claude Knepper. Paris, Lattès. 1987.

9 ■ See the chapter "The Moment that Vanquished them" on p. xxxix, and Letter 15 and Pocknells comments, pp. 29–31.

Tamás Koltai

People and Puppets

Sándor Weöres: *Holdbéli csónakos* (Waterman on the Moon) • Frigyes Karinthy: *Holnap reggel* (Tomorrow Morning) • Béla Pintér: *Parasztopera* (Peasant Opera).

Tamás Jordán, who was appointed director of the National Theatre in 2002, announced that the 2003/4 season—the first in which he would no longer be tied to plans inherited from his predecessor and be able to implement his own ideas—would be devoted solely to Hungarian stage works. That new repertory is a clear gesture, signalling that the National Theatre regards a constant presence of the country's dramatic literature on its stage as a matter of outstanding importance. It is instructive to note that when the Royal National Theatre in London finally secured a permanent base of its own, on the South Bank, in the early 1970s, the call was very much for it to devote more attention to the classics and modern works of world theatre rather than the native tradition. Here in Hungary, though, it is the home-grown works that stand in more need of nourishment, possibly because the country does not boast quite such an abundant dramatic literature. And the push is perhaps all the more understandable, considering that the building on the Danube left bank in which the National Theatre is now housed—whatever the many qualms about the design—represents its first permanent home since the institution was founded as long ago as 1837 (it operated in temporary quarters for the entire intervening century and a half).

The works that are being put on in this first season, with one exception, are revivals. That exception, the sole new play has not yet been identified: as of the time this article is being written (late autumn), the jury selecting the winning play from a competition run by the National Theatre is still at work, but the plan is for that to be mounted in the spring of 2004.

So far, two premieres have taken place. The first was of *Waterman on the Moon,* a fairy-tale play by Sándor Weöres. Weöres (1913–89) was one of the last century's supreme poets, capable of sounding registers from the childishly playful to a matchless philosophical profundity. *Waterman on the Moon* was written in 1941 at the request of a puppet theatre ensemble, with an intention also to put it on at the National. That fell by the wayside, however, and the first performance did not come about until 1970—the same year as an opera produced from it was put on.

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Virtually every one of Weöres's theatrical works similarly took years and even (as in this case) decades of delay before reaching the stage. There were various reasons for this, but the l'art pour l'art irrationality of which he was regularly accused certainly did not go down well with political régimes of any stripe, and he found the road to the public's heart by no means an easy one either. A hefty two-volume theatre guide that was published in 1981, which, over and above the acknowledged stage masterpieces of Hungarian and world literature, found room to outline dozens of second- and even third-rate plays, manages to mention his name only twice, and then as the translator of a comedy by Molière and of a Chinese play (he was a globetrotter from the 1930s onwards, and the poetry translations that he produced, working from rough translations, over half a century, filled three substantial volumes).

We now know that a couple of Weöres's verse plays—*Octopus avagy Szent György és a sárkány* (Octopus, or St George and the Dragon, 1965) and *A kétfejű fenevad* (The Two-headed Beast, 1968)—are amongst the cream of Hungarian-language drama, and as such they are regularly revived. The characters of *Waterman on the Moon* are the typical figures of Hungarian folk puppet theatre: Vitéz László ('László Hero', a kinsman of Punch or Pulcinella), Paprika Jancsi ('Johnny Paprika'), and Bolond Istók ('Stevie Muddlehead'), but mixed in with them are story elements from universal mythology such as Ancient Crete, Babylon in the time of the Assyrian Empire, Silene in North Africa at the time of Emperor Diocletian, and the Chinese Empire (Weöres reckoned that the books which had the biggest impact on his work were Laotzu's *Tao te ching,* the Akkadian *Gilgamesh,* and the *Bible*), with the cosmos forming a third plane. Princess Peacock-eye is pining for the Waterman on the Moon, about whom we learn little more than what his name suggests: he sails around on a small boat on the Moon's surface, and he sings. However, the four great kings of the Earth are also suitors for the princess's favour (and her hand in marriage), though she is not destined to be won either by them or by her ethereal idol but by her playmate who, by the end of the piece—after many intervening adventures—is elevated from being heir to the Lapp throne to the ruler of Lappland. The story has no moral pay-off, no cathartic aspects, and the tale is completely irrational and carries no message, which makes it refreshing.

The play is performed on the National Theatre's main stage. The technical facilities of this highly contentious, overly ornamental and less than ideally functional building are best suited for mounting huge spectacles, and a miraculous puppet theatre meets those conditions to a T. The complex trapdoor system and high-tech sound and lighting equipment come into their own. A lot of money and talent has been poured into the production: the colour floods alter by the second, there are flashing lights, dazzling back-projections, and gorgeously costumed characters vanish into the ground, then soar in the air. The scenes are staged on two levels, that of a puppet theatre and that of live theatre, with the two dimensions alternating, the humans also being puppets, the puppets also humans. A whole army of puppeteers, dancers, singers for the choral inserts, as well as actors have been coached by the various specialists and are marshalled by director Péter Valló, a real pro. The bottom line of the daft nonsense, if there is one, is that happiness is relative; the reason why the characters are puppets is so that life should not be painful to them. Fortunately, children, the segment of the audience who will most enjoy the production, are un-

likely to tumble to that notion, as they will be completely engrossed in the theatrical glamour.

Meanwhile, the National Theatre's studio is playing *Tomorrow Morning,* a long-forgotten work by Frigyes Karinthy. A remarkable intellect and unclassifiable writer, Karinthy (1887–1938) was a poet and short-story writer, novelist and dramatist, sage, essayist, and humorist. His parodies of the greats (and not so greats) of Hungarian and world literature, collected under the title "That's How You Write"), are so cruel and characteristic, and so irresistibly ridiculous that many people never even bother to read to originals. *A Voyage Round My Skull,* written in 1937 and dealing with an operation, two years before, on the brain tumour which eventually killed him, is a gripping tale of profound philosophical content which he dedicated to science, 'beyond myths and legends' (an English translation was first published in the UK in 1939). Making up his mind, at the age of 13, that he was going to be a physician and prime minister, he decided he would invent an aircraft and solve 'the riddle of the world' through the principle of randomness.

He may not have designed any aircraft, but Blériot's flight across the English Channel in 1909 fired his imagination for years—to such a degree that its impact is still discernible in the plot of *Tomorrow Morning,* a tragicomedy that he wrote in 1915. An experiment that occupies a unique place in Karinthy's output, indeed in virtually the entire Hungarian dramatic repertory of his day, the play attempted to formulate a way of life for the human race of the future that would be free of lies and convention whilst seeking modern theatrical means of expressing that new message.

The central figure in the play is the engineer Sándor Ember, a name that is clearly symbolic (*ember* = man), denoting the quintessence of the human race, a true Everyman. He has been deserted by his wife, who is now living with another man and despises Ember for being unwilling to fight a duel over her. The engineer is far from over the crisis and is looking for a way to win back the woman, even though she, like the rest of their acquaintances, has branded him a coward. At bottom, then, we have a classic love triangle. The two men meet in the interval of a concert and, unknown to the woman, fight an 'American duel': whichever of the two draws the black bullet undertakes to end his own life. Ember loses, and under the terms of the wager he is supposed to carry out the deed in an unmanned aircraft of his own design, a miracle item of military hardware specifically developed for committing mass murder (it is a remote-controlled dive bomber). The night before the first public test flight of the machine, the protagonist has a dream in which a Hungarophile Finnish doctor, whom he met at the concert, makes an appearance and excises from Ember's brain his fear of death, indeed, all the sentiments that are tied in with his inferiority complex: affection, love, solidarity. After taking off, the machine tips over, and the spectators gasp, but then it lands safely, and out of it steps a completely unfeeling, irreproachable superego who no longer has need of anyone except himself.

In truth, this is probably a piece that was justifiably consigned to oblivion, an unsuccessful attempt by Karinthy to marry drawing-room drama to a modern morality play. The trouble is that both these strands are contrived and simply do not work dramatically. The three sides of the love triangle have no real character, behave illogically and, in the end, become confused in the irrationality of their actions. The hero of the philosophical dra-

ma, for all that he is supposed to be a moral being, is in actual fact, with his aircraft, a militaristic madman, and because the infernal machine exists not only in his head but in reality, the world is no better. From that standpoint, the work might have been an absurd dystopia, even (given what we now know about military technology) brilliantly prophetic. Instead, it is just a muddled story in which the main figure is rid of his anxiety through his hallucinogenic instincts. Everyman becomes even more inhuman than he was before.

The performance looks elegant and generous, but that is merely surface. Director Iván Hargitai has waged a hopeless struggle trying to fit the play's realistic and abstract spheres together. The most vexatious symbol of that is the aircraft fuselage that is suspended over the circular space where the action takes place until, at the right moment, it is lowered and the characters climb, very literally, into the metaphor—a solution that satisfies neither realism nor the imagination. The visualisation of the Finnish doctor as a shadow figure, phantasm, or mental tourist-guide is similarly ham-fisted, whilst the production also comes a cropper at the very point where the real Karinthy shows himself as a satirist, poking fun at nationalistic small-mindedness. The actors might as well be puppets from the National Theatre's main stage upstairs (the studio is in the basement, directly below the latter stage), the only difference being that they are dressed up as people, but remain lifeless.

Puppet-like also describes the way the characters come across in an equally hard-to-categorise new theatrical work, the *Peasant Opera.* This is likewise a tragicomedy, ostensibly belonging to the operatic genre, though it would be a mistake to think it runs along traditional lines. The joint creation of composer Benedek Darvas and writer-director Béla Pintér, it draws on the widely diffused folk-tale motif, preserved in oral traditions, of the son who, unrecognised on his return home, is murdered by his parents for his money. Camus took this as the basis for *Le malentendu,* using it to incorporate an Existentialist concept of God, the creator who has brought us into the world only to permit tragedies to occur without so much as a peep: the force of destiny, as the title of Verdi's opera declares. Destiny is an appropriate mainspring for a tragic puppet play in the form of an opera, but then who writes operas these days? Only those who seek to enter the caste of the élite with an ear for niceties of tonality. Their works receive a single run of a few performances in some splendid opera house and are then quickly forgotten. With few exceptions, a yawning gulf now separates contemporary opera—indeed, modern serious music in general—from the general public. But is modern opera esoteric by necessity? Is it not something to be 'consumed' by a wider audience?

Peasant Opera has a go, at any rate. It is composed of separate numbers and recitatives. The latter have the function of getting us from one aria to the next, so it is these which contain the objective information that drives the plot forwards, just as they do in the libretto that Da Ponte wrote for *Don Giovanni.* Pintér's recitatives are mundane texts, often vulgar and even obscene—for intentionally ironic ends, of course. Darvas, on the other hand, gives the accompanying music a regular lilt and even throws in a Baroque-style harpsichord continuo, and so manages to be completely faithful to the genre yet witty with it. The melodies for the arias have their source in Hungarian folklore (as in Zoltán Kodály's works for the stage). The writer-director brings opposing worlds face to face on the stage through a peasant

ballad in which a story of passion in the classic folk style of a García Lorca is welded with picturesque Western romanticism as copyrighted by Puccini *(La Fanciulla del West)*—and with a parody of the latter. The groom here, despite being in love with his step-sister, is preparing to marry another girl when, at the wedding, it is revealed that she is the daughter not of her supposed father but of a stranger who had been to America then, on returning home, had seduced the mother. The uproar that ensues unravels the hidden strands: the one-time seducer was, in fact, no stranger but the groom's much older, now legendary brother who, having made his fortune abroad and brought the money back home incognito, fell victim to the murderous greed of his very own parents.

That simple story is told by a sophisticated dramatic-flashback technique. The seduction scene, for example, emerges as a highly embellished memory, whilst the murder is held back as a delayed climax to the very end of the piece. The stylistic potpourri accords with the portrayal of a reality cobbled together from the mundane and the soap-operatic, an Americanised vignette tipped into a peasant-style wedding (a favourite topos with Pintér). Thus, when the priest asks if anyone knows any cause or just impediment why the couple should not be joined together in holy matrimony, the repatriated Hungarian *kovboy* (the word is, of course, given a Hungarian pronunciation) makes his entrance kitted out with all the appurtenances of the sentimental folklore that has accreted to him; the Hungarian-inspired figures—moustachioed father, drunken railway man—hover in a zone somewhere between the homilies stitched on samplers and seedy reality. That same flippant cross-referencing defines the character of the music. The blend of folk and art song, spiced up with fruitful variations of melody and text, is complemented at appropriate places with influences from musicals and rock music, as well as by Baroque-style closes and interludes. All of this vouchsafes a consistent, deftly parcelled treat of pastiche and parody.

The direction abounds in clever ideas. The musicians, made up and costumed as old maids, sit on a stage set designed as a barn (Yuri Lubimov did something of the kind when he directed a production of *Don Giovanni* in Budapest some while ago). On the entry of the dream-cowboy, a torrent of music and lights floods down from above. The characters are deliberately puppet-like in their movements, freezing in poses during the arias to allow the singers to blossom. As the finale nears, the tragedy creeps unobtrusively to the fore, as befits a proper opera. *Peasant Opera* deservedly received the critics' award for the best production in the musical entertainment category of the 2002/3 season. ❧

Erzsébet Bori

Men Overboard

New Documentary Films

We can always count on the Hungarian documentary. Even if feature films are in deep or fairly deep water, even if funds are lacking, and even if they're not (though I can't think of an example of that offhand). Documentaries are not affected by changes in regime, governments or paradigms; they have no left and right wing. There are right-wing and left-wing filmmakers but the documentary itself is always on the side of the people. Even if it isn't about the losers, the poor or the unhappy. This is the only criterion that strictly applies to the genre. If that's kept to, from then on it's a free for all. At last year's (2002) Hungarian Film Week the army of those with a say in the film world just seethed. This year they actually achieved something: at last, in 2003, the documentaries weren't screened in out of the way small cinemas and hemmed in between feature films; they didn't have to engage in a one-sided battle for the attention of the trade and the public. They were given the first three days of the festival, and there was no need for pirate screenings either: the remaining films, amounting to many times the thirty or so documentaries selected for the competition, could also be seen as part of the official programme. Since in the selection, apart from the question of worth, a slight balancing act was inevitably apparent—we'll take a little of this and a little of that, he should get something and they too—the information screenings offered plenty of material rewarding to view. And we haven't even spoken about borderline cases such as Péter Forgács's piece in the experimental category, *A püspök kertje* (The Bishop's Garden), dealing with the very influential and contradictory life, spanning different political regimes, of the Calvinist bishop László Ravasz.

A few years ago the documentary with a historical subject was attractive, today less so and there are fewer. It isn't that they have run out of subjects, it's rather that the opportunities for this kind of undertaking, demanding as it does a tremendous amount of time, money and work, have been tapered down. Take 1956, for instance. If anything it is tempting to call it a gnawed bone, but in this year's Film Week alone several noteworthy films on the subject were shown. In her winning

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work in the category, *Fellebbezésnek helye nincs* (No Appeal), Ágnes Pap filmed again the old story but from the different viewpoint of the family members left behind, the widows and the orphans, presenting us with convincing proof of the many aspects of 1956 still left to be explored. Zsolt Kézdi Kovács chose one of these for himself in his *Az a nap, a miénk* (That Day Was Ours). At first glance we might wonder whether a film of marathon length about what students of the College of Fine Arts did on October 23rd (the day the Revolution broke out) holds any interest for us. That day which we're so familiar with from the first minute to the last. Many of those appearing—today quite famous people—partly justify our doubts when, instead of personal recollections, they repeat for the umpteenth time things which they (and we too) have seen, heard and read ever since. But only partly. Because all at once the film director Judit Elek turns up and, ignoring compulsory conventions, starts talking with amazing frankness about her fears at the time. Or another well-known director, Károly Makk, who, though he only came on the scene at the pulling down of the Stalin statue, vividly describes how the sparks crackled around Stalin's neck from the friction of the cable. With a bit of editing and cutting back of the participants' desire to perform, a more worthy film could have been made from the memories of the eye-witnesses.

Real historical films exposing blank spots are few and far between nowadays. I would name Szilveszter Siklósi's *Menedéket adó váram* (My Castle, My Shelter) about how Pannonhalma Abbey preserved both lives and values in the Second World War, even though this film raises at least as many questions as it answers. No light was shed on the mysterious personality of Father Krizosztom and his political-diplomatic games, nor on the whereabouts of the Swiss director of the children's home operating within the abbey (after the war he shared the same fate as Raoul Wallenberg, disappearing in Soviet custody). András Kisfaludy adapted for the screen a shocking case in his *Gyömrői gyilkosságok* (Murders in Gyömrő). Taking advantage of the lawless situation in 1945 between the passing of the fighting and the setting up of the new local government, certain members of the partly reorganized local police and the Communist Party methodically wiped out the "suits" in the Gyömrő district, the priest, the notaries, the teachers, the doctors... Those who stayed on did so presumably because they hadn't sullied their hands in the Arrow Cross times and thought of themselves as not guilty. Though the series of twenty-eight (!) murders began as a local abuse of power, a war of revenge by the underclass, the Communist regime later legitimised them in that the murderers went unpunished, which made the relatives of the victims pay the price many times over.

When shooting her film about the Gypsy holocaust *(Porrajmos)*, Ágota Varga learnt about the institution of Gypsy forced-labour. The characters of *Fekete lista* (Black List), Gypsies from various parts of the country living in better or worse conditions—of course most of them poor—were always forced to live on the fringe of society, but when trouble came they had an "equal" part to play. During the war one family from Hódmezővásárhely included a son taken off as a conscript to the Battle of the Don, as well as a man and woman dragged off for forced labour, a girl who was raped and a boy returning home from Siberia after twelve years of *"malenki robot"* (people picked up on the street and dragged off to the Soviet Union for "a little work", i.e. forced labour). The stories illustrate the inhumanity of power and also its exceptional

stupidity: at first the Gypsies were called up for regular armed service, but later the racist laws were extended to cover them. In 1944, when the Red Army had already crossed the country's border and everyone knew that the war was lost, Gypsy soldiers were discharged and individually taken back to their homes. There they were organised into labour brigades according to regions, and ordered to dig trenches that were supposed to stop the Russian advance. A Gypsy brigade from the region of Csongrád was dragged across half the country then disbanded in the county of Tolna at a time when the Russians had already crossed the Danube. Only one survivor of the brigade is alive today.

The crop of socio-films is still strong, after all we're not exactly short of people on the breadline, though the majority only watches human suffering from a cinema seat or in their living room. I should add that, because documentary films need the latter as well. It would be worth seeing what would happen if the TV screened a film about the homeless (for instance, Zsigmond Pap Gábor's *A flaszter népe* (Streetpeople) or about autistic children (Csaba Szekeres: *Mami, blue*) at peak-viewing time, and afterwards screened a telephone number for donations. Because the documentaries quite unashamedly have a side effect which we might term solidarity. But more important still is to expose the truth, and the awareness and self-knowledge that is gained through this.

Neither society nor institutions are prepared for living with the sick, the handicapped and the deviant. We often don't even know what to do with people who are temporarily in difficulties. The rejection of people who are different often disguises fear, the dizziness and flinching that we feel on catching sight of the precipice. If there is someone who can lead us there on a passable road, it wouldn't hurt if they held our hand—because the viewer is also in need of contact and help, not just those involved. At times Judit Surányi doesn't walk on a road, but on a tightrope. She takes us to places where we have no business to be, we see and hear things which are nothing to do with us. All this is thanks to the blind trust of two people, and we can be certain that Surányi won this trust deservedly. *Tiszta románc* (Pure Romance) doesn't overstep the mark, but it goes dangerously near to it, which is almost disastrous because we know that she's not (just) risking her own skin. Zetor and Balázs, the lovers in the film are drug addicts. An advanced stage of degeneration is apparent on the boy, and he has been brought back from death about as many times as his years (27 and 29), but the girl is still full of ambition. She lives partly at home with her mother and partly on the street; she uses murderous stuff like turpentine, but at the same time she goes to school, in fact she's a bright pupil. She is touching in her devotion to Balázs whom we outsiders see just as a human wreck. His parents no longer allow a son formerly spoilt, to enter the home; they help him with food and returnable empty bottles and do his washing. One of the most upsetting moments of the film is when Balázs kneels half-naked on his mother's threshold, about to put on clean clothes.

At the other extreme Ágnes Sós has made a film about rich and successful entrepreneurs. We haven't had many of these in recent years and not by chance, nor because of the laziness or inadvertence of the documentarists either. The change of regime hit the heroes of *Tőkések vagyunk, vagy mi* (So What, We're Capitalists) not long after they'd finished university. They had a good think and together they launched into leasing, something that

hadn't existed in Hungary. And it worked. When, still only thirty something, they recall the start, even they can't quite understand it, and they put their leap into the unknown down to the boldness of the green and inexperienced. Now they are at a crossroads: the company has reached the limits of its growth, they've got to the peak where a hundred million here or there doesn't count any more (as one of them admitted with a slight blush). These people have made their fortunes legally, through their own work and talent, and they have a feeling of social responsibility. They are trying to support good causes (hospitals, children's sport). They've nothing to be ashamed of, they can stand in front of the camera with heads held high. We see them at work, at meetings, in their family circle, indulging in their favourite pastimes, at a company party, even in the throes of sorting out a workplace conflict. They talk about their dilemmas. Nevertheless, at the back of the viewer's mind is the question as to how much of what we are seeing is an authentic personality sketch and how much is a role. Maybe we've got used to meeting unfortunate people with difficult fates in documentaries who present themselves unvarnished, and their slight attempts to patch things over make them seem even more fallible. I have absolutely no doubt that Ágnes Sós's characters are upright people, but we have to bear in mind that those in charge of a big firm give a controlled picture of themselves, they know what they can disclose and to what extent, and the words and gestures that make them likeable. Sós carried out quite a feat of arms by managing to get that section of society which is lost in the clouds in front of a microphone and a camera. At the time of the Film Week the director still didn't know whether the participants would give permission for the film to be distributed.

The revealing-investigative documentaries are disappearing. With press freedom, this socially useful activity now takes place in the newspapers and television. For the most part. Because the most significant and most sensitive issues are beyond the scope of the previously mentioned channels: they often demand Sherlock Holmes style detective work, secure legal backing and an incredible amount of legwork. Great determination, not a little courage and the tenacity of a hound. The films Ádám Csillag made show that he has these qualities. For years he has been occupied with the ramifications of the Danube dam issue *(Dunatorzó, Dunaszaurusz),* more recenly, however, he has been shooting in the eastern limits of the country: he has just completed the sequel to his prize-winning *Mostohák* (Foster-Care). Because once again Csillag is standing his ground. He hasn't let the subject slip, but after two years has returned to the scene. In his experience no changes occured, the same people are in charge of child welfare with the same mentality. *A megye árvái* (The Orphans of the County) is full of the tragedies of children placed with foster-parents, in homes, with their real parents, sent to detention centres, adopted abroad, children leaving or thrown out of state care, and the grown-ups who are responsible for their fates. The tension—and the film—only loosens up when the politicians start speaking in the county hall or at a meeting of the foster parents' association. Their overworked platitudes and non-binding promises are light years away from the problems that torture families and are crying out for remedies. To realise this we have to make the sacrifice of tearing ourselves away from Gábor Balog's pictures for a few moments, from the faces of the serenely smiling little ones and the bigger children anxious about their futures who already know that

over their parents there stands a bigger power which they are all at the mercy of.

To film reality you need just as long a period of preparation and even more time for shooting than for a feature film. You can't make a documentary out of a one or two week trip. Or can you? I had my doubts as I sat down to watch Gábor Ferenczi's *Magyar bulletin* (Hungarian Bulletin) which he admits to having made during two lightning visits to the Székelyföld region in Romania. What's more it's on a terribly sensitve, hysterically politicised subject—the Hungarian identity card that can be applied for on the basis of the so-called Status Law which aims to support Hungarian minorities beyond the country's borders. He didn't want to treat the subject in depth or even up and down the country, he just took some shots which didn't need any special organisation or extensive system of contacts. He purposely chose places where (one would think) there would be no question as to who was Hungarian. Everyone. And the Romanians living with them and among them would easily pass through the sieve, after all they speak Hungarian like one of us. But to possess the identity card they need more convincing proof. You have to prove you belong to a church or are a member of the organisation, and this includes payment of the annual fee or parochial tax. Apart from that, Gypsies have to certify with bills how they spent the allowance given to children who attend Hungarian schools. A man born into the Orthodox faith, who has abandoned both his faith and his ethnicity and who, together with his (Hungarian) child, has been deserted by his (Hungarian) wife, is in a fix. He'd like to convert to Calvinism, but the minister first wants to be convinced of his sincerity and of what he really believers and of his knowledge of the Heildelberg catechism. Young wives seem to be on the run in this part of the world because another (Hungarian) man isn't interested in the identity card because he's down in the dumps having also been abandoned. There are some who have applied for it because they'd like to benefit from the advantages it brings, and some who don't want to use it for anything, they are content with its symbolic value. There are some who would apply for it but they can't produce the annual membership fee for the certification. A shepherd stands on the Hargita mountains with his wife and two children. He watches over the sheep from spring till autumn, night and day, they sleep next to them in a shed. He doesn't really know what the whole thing is about and wouldn't have time to arrange things anyway. In the lovely Farkaslaka (Lupeni)—a pure Hungarian village—everything is organised. The town crier shouts out that people can now go and get their photos taken (in that remote little place even an official photo can be a problem), and they have found someone who will bring the documents for the whole village from Budapest. But this is by no means plain sailing: if you haven't got a relative in Budapest you are forced to spend the night in the doorway of the office because only someone who is there at opening time can hope to be given a number for the queue. *Hungarian Bulletin* makes something ob-vious we already suspected: it's not easy to be Hungarian. The good thing about Ferenczi's film is that there is no politics or ideology in it, just people. Who have an even tougher life than we do, who make greater efforts and experience at a deeper level the fact of where and to whom they are born. But they have no intention of regarding their homeland as a reservation where, in exchange for the defence and support drawn from the mother country, they will preserve their archaic way of life on behalf of us too. In Farkaslaka for a moment we catch sight of the internet café, favourite meeting-place of the

local young, diagonally opposite the church and the writer's Áron Tamási's grave.

Béla Szobolits chose a similarly topical and much debated subject when he set out to trace the fate of the Gypsies from Zámoly. In the first part of *Sírsz Magyarországért? Sírjál!*) (You are Crying for Hungary? Cry Then!) describes the family's troubles in Hungary, while the second part is the far from simple story of their request for asylum in Strasbourg and setting up home abroad. Not long ago the press was full of the Zámoly Gypsies, but practically no one took the trouble to go after the business decently, providing an accuate report. These are the worst kind of blank spots: when people think they are well informed, whereas all they know of is the sensation and its scandalous aspects. With insight Szobolits discovered the drama behind the hooha, and in the drama of the Zámoly Gypsies he exposed the situation of all the Gypsies in Hungary and the path they are forced to take.

The judges for the documentaries, though praising it highly, didn't know where to place Lívia Gyarmathy's *Táncrend* (Programme of Dance). It really is a borderline case. It is not the omission of social, welfare or private problems that makes it that, it's the language of the film. The mode of portrayal built on the pictures, montage and music, with no text or dialogue, which the director elaborated in her previous film, *A mi gólyánk* (Our Stork), a success at home and abroad, with both cinéasts and audiences. In that film we came across for the first time that wise, good-humoured, ironic and deferential attitude to life which is almost unique in Hungarian documentary film-making.

I can accept the talking heads films too if they are talking about interesting things. I'm content with minimalist means if they show people whose fate or personality touches me. But there's no denying that in the hands of directors who started out in feature films—alongside Gyarmathy and Janisch we can count Ádám Csillag and Zoltán Kamondi—the genre is transformed, new possibilities unfold. And vice versa: the experience, schooling and awareness of a documentary film-maker can contribute to the value of the feature film. For that reason I think it's a pity that the new generation of feature film-makers isn't interested in documentaries.

Tamás Almási, the director with the highest reputation in the field today, also came from feature films. His previous documentary, *Sejtjeink* (Our Cells), about couples taking part in the test-tube baby programme, was seen by thousands in the cinema and hundreds of thousands on television. An extra screening had to be arranged for *Az út vége* (The End of the Road) at the Film Week because of the enormous interest. Almási makes classical documentaries in which either the sentimental-lyrical approach *(More than Love, Our Cells)* or the dramatic approach dominates. *The End of the Road* is the parallel story of two young couples from eastern Hungary, each with two children. The opportunities in the place where they live are extremely limited, at the most we can speak of "obligatory" choices. One of the couples regards keeping the family together as most important, so they stay where they are and try their hand at all sorts of things locally—with such patience and smiling good-humour even after many years that one really wonders where they get their strength from. The other couple, Ilona and Tibor, take a daring plunge and, leaving the children with the grandparents, take up work at the other end of the country, in the IBM works in Székesfehérvár. In America, yes, but here in Hungary it's not at all usual to move with your family in search of work, largely due to the incredible difficulties in finding somewhere to

live. In the socialist days great numbers "commuted" (the Hungarian terms covers someone who spends the month or week at the other end of the country) to get their wages—the documentaries confronted us with this phenomenon—on which the family made do relatively well, but there was no chance for them to create a new life in the big city. On the current average wage you wouldn't be able to afford the travelling costs of commuting, let alone set up a new home. We can easily regard Ilona and Tibor's undertaking as the start of a new era. The young woman started out from a farmstead where there was no water or electricity; she peeled onions for a local market gardener for a pittance, whereas at IBM, in a sterile, snow-white overall she assembles miniature computer parts under a microscope in an assembly hall recalling a futurist film. Her enthusiasm is only overshadowed by the fact that she misses her children. Eventually, with the help of a living allowance from the factory they manage to rent a flat where the family can once again be together, but they don't feel at home in the prefab block. They miss a garden. And once again it becomes clear that there is no passage between the two worlds: with wages that can be considered high—particularly in comparison to conditions in Szabolcs county where they came from—you can't begin to buy a house in West Hungary. When they start laying off workers at IBM, but well before the final closure, the family goes back to where they set out from. They get work in a poultry processing plant, and they move into an attractive new house. It looks as though this is the end of the road —says Ilona, with a touch of irony.

Built up with a dramaturgy recalling feature films, in its 58 minutes the film exposes, in sharp dramatic situations and human fates, numerous problems and dilemmas of Hungary on the threshold of European Union membership, revealing the deepening gulf between east and west. The change in regime brought unlimited opportunities which, for the majority, are demonstrated in the limits to those opportunities.

Ádám Csillag arranged a screening of *The Orphans of the County* and invited the child welfare people. His next film will tell us whether there was any point to this: if the problems have been solved he'll take up a new subject, if not he'll get down to the third part of *Foster Care. The End of the Road* should be seen by those who decide on the country's future, but even more so by those who, searching for their own happiness, are building that future. Sometimes we feel we know more than enough about it, but the not to be delayed discovery of Hungary, putting the country on a different track or changing its course, the pulling ashore of people who have fallen into the water and sunk like a stone, or who are flinging their arms about desperately or swimming on their backs, fronts, doing butterfly or doggy paddle, can't be done without the Hungarian documentary. ❧

Sir,—What a tale Miklós Vajda tells of the London foray of the Hungarian Poets! (*HQ* 171, "If any harm comes of this, I'll kill you!") One miscue after another, and yet he managed to pull the fractious team together for program after program. Having been a part of the New York and Washington experiences, I realize how little I was able to infer what was really going on among the poets. One memory that has never left me is of the audience at the Guggenheim calling out the titles of Weöres's nursery rhymes and his reciting them from memory, an inspired elfin presence, to their cheers. Another: Hungarian-Americans who had come by the busload to the programs telling William Jay Smith and me how grateful they were that we had translated their poets. I hope Miklós Vajda will write the whole story of the American tour.

Dr Koncz's account of Ted Hughes and Pilinszky is fascinating too. I remember meeting Pilinszky when we were in Budapest, conversing with him in my lame French, and years later finding a book about his relationship with his Negro muse.

Hope that *HQ* 172 will be as interesting as 171.

Daniel Hoffman
Swarthmore, PA
U.S.A.

Sir,—I am a long time reader of your magazine, since 1986, so I have seen many changes in the last 17 years, many of them very positive. Your recent article by Péter Esterházy, "Reporting from the Moon" was an example of not only positive change, but a thoughtful contribution to discussions about Hungary, Central Europe/East Europe, European integration and the United States. It should be required reading for the leaders of nations near and far. They don't even have to know Hungarian, as they can read this terrific article in English thanks to *The Hungarian Quarterly!* Thank you.

Michael Kaplan
Portland, Oregon
U.S.A.

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An immigrant Hungarian,
finickily unsatisfied
with conditions here,
asks why, in point of fact,
I am in America.
My answer is because
this is the only way
in which I can hope
to remain a Hungarian writer.
Curious though
it may be,
that really is the case.

From:
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